

## **Individual Identity and Social Identity: Conflict or Confluence?**

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### **Various Concepts of Identity**

A search for the ideas underlying individual identity and social identity led first to basic definitions of the term “identity”, so that the various shades of meaning could be explored.

Definitions from psychology and sociology are obviously to be examined, but it may be useful to look at some from other fields. At first glance, they might not appear relevant, but a closer analysis may give new insights.

- **Individuality : Specificity : Uniqueness** -- The person as “the only one of a kind” in the world.
- **Sameness : Constancy : Invariability over Time** – The person as having enduring characteristics.
- **Authenticity : Genuineness : Reality** -- The person as showing his/her true self.
- **Mathematical Equality : No Difference** – The person as indistinguishable from anyone else in general.
- **Matching : Twin-like : Duplicate** – The person as exactly like someone else in particular.
- **Interchangeability: Substitutability** – The person as a replacement for someone else.
- **Affinity : Association : Linkage** – The person as similar to other people in a group.

### **Everyday Examples of Identity**

Some identity issues are particularly visible in the news.

The positive identification of criminals and other people linked to particular incidents.

The identification of ancestry by genetic determination – DNA analysis.

Identity theft – the misuse of credentials and other data to claim another person’s identity.

The tracking of commercial items by bar codes or radio signals – RFID.

The misuse of identification cards and similar documents (e.g., passports) to gain improper access to certain resources or locations.

The use of devices to establish the credibility of documents—personal seals, rubber stamps, and signatures.

**Fingerprints** – Even identical twins have different fingerprints.

**Bar Code Labels** – Establish the identity of a product to which it is attached..

**Identity cards** – Show a likeness of the person (e.g., facial photograph or fingerprint)

**Rubber Stamps** – Produce an image, often to supplement a signature, on a document.



## Identity Problems

Sometimes it is difficult or impossible to correctly classify or specify a person because of the lack of constancy or the lack of distinguishing information.

People's search for identity or change of identity is a well-known literary theme.

**Jekyll & Hyde – Multiple Personalities**

**Muslim Women in Burkas taking photos of each other**

**Themes of many books and films**

## Continuity of Identity

Academic and popular debates about the changeability of personality.

**Fear of lack of continuous identity persisting over time.**

**But, just because you're evolving doesn't mean you don't persist over time.**

## Influences on Identity & Manifestations of Identity

With regard to some variables, there appear to be reciprocal interactions between the factors that impact the identity and the resulting manifestations. One's identity influences vocational choice, and in turn one's job impacts the identity.

**Creations (Outputs)** -- The works of artists, writers, and music composers often show a distinctive style.

**Choices (Inputs & Outputs)** – Inputs: The selection of activities, the choice of what to learn, the decision of who to spend time with, the pick of workplace. Outputs: The quality and quantity of the results of one's activities.

**Values (Inputs)** – The ethical principles imparted by parents and other relatives, teachers, clergy, friends, etc.

**Beliefs (Inputs)** – Convictions built over time from experience and exposure to authority figures that are general ideas, usually untested, about how things really are in the universe.

**Appearance (Inputs)** – The physical features of one's body, particularly the face, and how they are perceived by others.

**Ethnicity (Inputs)** – One's ancestry as a member of a particular biosocial group.

**Practices, Habits (Outputs)** – Repetitive activities often performed without awareness, but noticed by others.

**Work, Hobbies (Inputs & Outputs)** – Inputs: vocational and avocational choices of activities. Outputs: The tangible and intangible outcomes of these activities.

**Family (Inputs)** – The influence of the nuclear family over the lifespan. The members change over time, as do their statuses and roles.

**Friends (Inputs)** – The nonfamily acquaintances with whom relationships are formed. Inputs: Friends can sometimes be stronger influences than family members on one's activities and opinions.

**Interests (Inputs)** – The advice and activities of influential others and the accessibility of resources promote particular pursuits.

**Objects, Possessions (Outputs)** – The physical items that one owns, particularly those seen by others, provide symbols of identity—particularly one’s clothing and sometimes one’s automobile and home.

**Language (Inputs & Outputs)** – Inputs: The language learned in the family and in school influence the thought processes. Outputs: The language used to communicate reveals much about one’s educational and social status.

### **Multiple Identities**

Self-classification into several categories—but some may not naturally overlap.

**The person is one element (member) of several intersecting sets (groups)**

**Family**

**College Friends**

**Neighbors**

**Recreation Friends**

**Work Colleagues**

### **When is Identity Established?**

Lots of emphasis on adolescence as a critical stage in identity formation.

Probably not set at a specific age, but some stages may be more important than others.

It is likely that identity is changing throughout one’s lifetime.

### **Other Identity Issues**

The term “identity” has been used in many topical areas.

- **Search for identity**
- **Loss of identity**
- **Mistaken identity**
- **Identity theft**
- **Identity economics**
- **Identity politics**
- **Identity management**
- **Identity matrix**
- **Identity disorder**
- **Cultural identity**
- **Online identity**

## Philosophy of Identity

Philosophers have dealt with the concept of identity, usually when considering how to define the “self.” The discussion of this often begins with the propositions made by:

- Rene Descartes
- John Locke
- David Hume

### Descartes: “Meditations” (1641)

Conducted a formal introspection of his thinking and body functioning in order to find the self.

- **Insists that the mind and the body are distinct entities (dualism).**
- **The only thing that a person can be sure about is thinking.**
- **Therefore, the self, and thus one’s identity, must reside in the mind, rather than in the body.**
- **Thus, you are what you are thinking about.**

### Locke: “Of Identity and Diversity” (1690)

Locke rejected dualism and looked for an empirical basis for explaining the self.

- **Deals with a variety of issues relevant to identity, including sameness and difference with regard to the time and place of things; and the distinguishing characteristics of vegetables, animals, and people.**
- **Regarding personal identity, consciousness is the crucial requirement, which constitutes the self. This in turn relies on memory to provide continuity.**
- **Thus, you are what you can remember.**

### Hume: “Of Personal Identity” (1739)

Hume also wanted an empirical explanation, but disputed Locke’s position that memory was needed.

- **Disagrees with John Locke’s equating of the self with consciousness that required memory.**
- **Consciousness consists of “...a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity.”**
- **“...Questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties.”**
- **Thus, you are a retrospective construction of your imagination.**

## Individual Identity

The psychological definition of identity focuses on personal self-concept.

**Psychologists emphasize a person's individuality—a personal identity.**

**Unique life history.**

**Endogenous Factors.**

**Ego Identity**

**Erik Erikson**

**James Marcia**

### Erikson: "Identity and the Life Cycle" (1959)

Establishment of one's identity is considered to be the most important task in life.

### Erikson's Theory

Has a psychoanalytic basis, but focuses more on positive development.

### Erikson versus Freud

Both theories have 8 stages to be lived in sequence, but the order is less rigid for Erikson. Freud focuses on sex and aggression as the motivating forces, while Erikson portrays a drive toward maturity.

### Erikson's Stages of Development

Each stage has a set of competencies to be attained, building upon the previous stages.

### Erikson's Idea of the Self

An integrated bundle of accumulated competencies acquired by successfully resolving crises associated with each stage.

- **The often misunderstood term 'identity crisis' simply means 'a period of self-doubt and active questioning about one's definition of self ('Who am I?' "Where am I going?") during the adolescent years.' This period is an integral part of healthy psychological development.**
- **Unless and until one has established his or her identity, he or she suffers identity confusion, i.e. no consistent sense or set of internal principles for assessing his or her self-worth in the major areas of life.**
- **If the identity crisis is successful, one has established his or her identity, i.e. having committed oneself to a set of principles, a vocational direction, an ideological perspective on the surrounding world, etc.**
- **Thus, you are the result of an identity crisis.**

## **Marcia: “Ego-Identity Status” (1966)**

**Focused on the adolescent period as requiring the most analysis.**

### **Marcia’s Identity Status Categories**

The result of a two-dimensional classification of binary outcomes that yields a four-fold table.

#### **Exploration X Commitment**

Exploration is the active confrontation with a crisis. (Absent or Present)

Commitment is the dedication to pursue a course of action, (Absent or Present)

#### **Foreclosure Identity Status**

- **The foreclosure status is when a commitment is made without exploring alternatives. Often these commitments are based on parental ideas and beliefs that are accepted without question.**
- **Adolescents may foreclose on the handed-down identity willingly or under pressure. The case of "negative-identity" occurs when adolescents adopt an identity in direct opposition to a prescribed identity.**

#### **Identity Diffusion**

- **Some adolescents become overwhelmed by the task of identity development and neither explore nor make commitments, and may become socially isolated and withdrawn.**
- **Marcia suggested that those with identity diffusion 'do not experience much anxiety because there is little in which they are invested.'**

#### **Identity Moratorium**

- **The status of individuals who are in the midst of a crisis, but whose commitments are either absent or are only vaguely defined. The moratorium status is characterized by the active exploration of alternatives.**
- **Marcia noted that 'moratoriums...report experiencing more anxiety than do subjects in any other status...The world for them is not, currently, a highly predictable place; they are vitally engaged in a struggle to make it so.'**

#### **Identity Achievement**

- **Once a crisis has occurred, 'a likely progression would be from diffusion through moratorium to identity achievement.' The latter is thus the status of individuals who have typically experienced a crisis, undergone identity explorations, and made commitments.**
- **Marcia found evidence to support his 'theoretical description of subjects who have achieved an identity as having developed an internal, as opposed to external, locus of self-definition.'**

## Applicability to Adulthood

Marcia's Ego-Identity Status categories form the factors of a vocational identity instrument used for career counseling.

- **While Marcia primarily focused on the late adolescent years, his theory is applicable in later adulthood, when identity crises may reoccur.**
- **People's identity status is not specifically limited to an age group. Individuals may explore elements tied to their identity throughout life, such as faith, ideology, and occupational preference.**
- **Thus, you are a “work-in-progress” that is likely to change over time.**

## Cross-Cultural Applicability

[Need to find studies that show this. How about questionnaires instead of interviews?]

- **Using Marcia's semi-structured interview approach enables research to be flexibly adapted to different cultures.**
- **There has been a good deal of cross-cultural validation of the Identity Statuses.**

## Social Identity.

By definition, other people are involved.

**Sociologists emphasize role-behavior—a social identity.**

**Perceived group affiliation.**

**Exogenous Factors.**

**Identity Theory**

**Social Identity Theory**

**Self-Categorization**

**Sheldon Stryker**

**Henri Tajfel**

**John C. Turner**

## Stryker: Identity Theory (1968)

Seems to emphasize interpersonal encounters rather than group memberships.

- **A micro-sociological theory, which links self-attitudes, or identities, to the role relationships and role-related behavior of individuals.**
- **The self consists of a collection of identities, each of which is based on occupying a particular role.**
- **Thus, you may be a different person, depending upon who you are dealing with.**



### **Tajfel: Social Identity Theory (1979)**

Isn't the process of self-categorization much different from the process of categorizing other people?

- **Social identity theory has four elements.**
- **1) Categorization: We often put others (and ourselves) into categories. Labeling someone a Muslim, a Turk, or a soccer player are ways of saying other things about these people.**
- **2) Identification: We also associate with certain groups (our in-groups), which serves to bolster our self-esteem.**
- **3) Comparison: We compare our groups with other groups (the out-groups), seeing a favorable bias toward the group to which we belong.**
- **4) Psychological Distinctiveness: We desire our identity to be both distinct from, and positively compared with, other groups.**
- **Thus, you are a multi-dimensional product of many groups.**

### **Turner: Self-Categorization Theory (1987)**

Isn't there a difference between identifying with people you have encountered face-to-face as opposed to an organization you identify with, based solely on ideology?

- **People self-categorize "depending on whether a social categorization into ingroup and outgroup can meaningfully be applied to the current social context."**
- **In one setting, it may be more advantageous to group oneself according to race, whereas in another setting, benefit may be derived from categorizing oneself based on educational experience.**
- **People may also categorize themselves within a subset of a larger group in a nested pattern of sorts, choosing to identify with a smaller group to which positive attributes are ascribed, but dissociate from the broader, encompassing group to which negative attributes are attached.**
- **There is a tendency to categorize oneself in the group that will provide association with a higher status.**
- **Thus, you are the result of your own selection of groups.**

### **Tajfel & Turner's Theory (1986)**

- **An individual's social identity is defined by group membership.**
- **This approach is broadly concerned with the relationship between self and society.**
- **For Tajfel, this is the key to understanding prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict.**
- **Social identity theory rejects explanations based on individual physiology, personality, or attitude. In this regard, it represents a challenge to more traditional psychological theories.**

## **Social Psychology.**

**Combines psychological and sociological approaches.**

**Identity Formation**

**Identity Negotiation**

**Identity Change**

**Life-Span Development**

**The present proposition promotes Organizational Psychology as a branch of Applied Social Psychology.**

## **Organizational Psychology**

- **Formerly called “Industrial Psychology,” this application-oriented field has broadened its scope to include many settings in addition to the workplace.**
- **Long, active history of research in work motivation and job satisfaction throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.**
- **More recent interest (since 1970’s) in organizational commitment, focusing on cognition.**
- **Most recent emphasis (since 1990’s) has been on more emotional aspects of organizational identification.**
- **Frederick Herzberg**
- **Blake Ashforth**
- **Alex Haslam**
- **Jane Dutton**

## **Herzberg: “The Motivation to Work” (1959)**

### **Herzberg’s Theory**

**Hygiene Factors**

**Motivator factors**

## **Ashforth & Mael: “Social Identity Theory and the Organization” (1989)**

- **Article in *Academy of Management Review* was the first to formally specify links between social identity theory and organizational behavior.**
- **The social identity approach to organizational psychology has since become a major paradigm in the field, and the number of citations to this article continue to grow.**

## Haslam: Social Identity Approach (2001)

### Motivation & Identity

Haslam – Shows that Herzberg’s two dimensions of motivation can be assigned thus:

- a) Motivators – Personal Identity– Individual-serving
- b) Hygiene Factors – Social Identity– Group-serving

### The ASPIRe Model (2003)

- Haslam’s acronym model for applying identity concepts to organizations:
- Actualizing
- Social and
- Personal
- Identity
- Resources to
- enhance
- Organizational outcomes

### Social Capital

- Resources inherent in the network of alliances and relationships within a workforce that contribute to:
- 1) an organization’s reputation,
- 2) its members’ *esprit de corps*,
- 3) their loyalty and commitment.

### Identity Resources

- Unique Personal Identity – Employees’ internalized definitions of themselves as individuals.
- Shared Social Identity – Employees’ awareness that they are members of a common group.

### An Individual’s Self-Concept

- Can be defined along a continuum:

Personal Identity ←-----→ Social Identity

Interpersonal Behavior ←-----→ Intergroup Behavior

Depersonalization is a process of self-stereotyping.

The self-perception changes from unique to categorically interchangeable with other ingroup members, who then become part of the self, which is redefined as ‘we’ instead of ‘I.’

### **Social Identity Saliency**

- **Is increased by:**
  - 1) **Collective interaction**
  - 2) **Outgroup threat**
  - 3) **Intergroup comparison**
- **Leads to:**
  - a) **More homogeneous representations of out-groups**
  - b) **Greater trust within the group**
  - c) **Better communication within the group**
  - d) **Improved co-operation within the group**

### **Dutton: Positive Identity Construction (2010)**

#### **Positive Relationships at Work (PRW)**

- **An interdisciplinary domain of inquiry.**
- **Focuses on:**
  - 1) **Generative Processes,**
  - 2) **Relational Mechanisms, and**
  - 3) **Positive Outcomes associated with positive relationships between people at work.**

#### **PRW Areas of Inquiry**

- **Conditions, processes, and mechanisms in organizational relationships.**
- **Capacity for growth, learning, generativity, and resilience.**
- **Individuals, groups, and organizations.**
- **Builds on the scholarship of the Positive Psychology and Positive Organizational Behavior movements.**

#### **Positive Identity Perspectives**

- 1) **Virtue**
- 2) **Evaluative**
- 3) **Developmental**
- 4) **Structural**

### The Virtue Perspective

- A work-related identity is positive when the identity content is infused with virtuous qualities or character strengths that correspond to the qualities that distinguish people of good character and that are defined as inherently good.
- “Master virtues” such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence have been identified as morally good qualities.

### The Evaluative Perspective

- Focuses on the regard that people associate with their work-related identities.
- People generally like to feel good about themselves, and are motivated to claim identity characteristics and/or groups that favorably distinguish themselves from others.
- This captures subjective feelings of self-regard as :
  - 1) An individual at work (i.e., personal identity),
  - 2) A member of work relationships (i.e., relational identity),
  - 3) A member of work-based social identity groups (i.e., social identity).

### The Developmental Perspective

- Focuses on the change in an identity or self-definition *over time*.
- Assumes that the identity is dynamic and capable of progress and adaptation.
- 1) **Progressive Approach**: Evidence of positivity is progression toward a higher-order stage of identity development.
- 2) **Adaptive Approach**: Individuals systematically alter the content of the identity to achieve a more appropriate fit with a set of internal or external standards.

### The Structural Perspective

- This refers to the way that an individual’s identity content or self-concept is organized.
- An individual’s identity structure is more positive when the multiple facets of the identity are in a balanced and/or complementary relationship with one another.
- This sustains the identities making up the self in group situations.

### Social Resources

- These are the valuable assets inherent in the structure, content, and quality of the connections that individuals have at work.
- They strengthen employees by increasing their capacity for enduring stress and hardship and/or increasing their capacity to take on new demands and challenges.
- Thus positive work-related identity formation is aimed at building social resources.

## Proposed Research Program

### Problem

- Studies focused on work-related identities (e.g., occupational identity, professional identity, organizational identity, etc.) assume that individuals wish to construct positive identities in their work domain.
- However, the word “positive” has been defined and applied in a variety of ways.
- Research is needed to clarify what makes a work-related identity positive.

### Purpose

- This research program is focused on answering three questions posed by Dutton, et al (2010):
  - 1) What are the antecedents (the context and the “jolts”) to identity construction?
  - 2) What are the important sources of identity threats?
  - 3) Where are the linkages among various types of positive identity construction?

### Plan

- Time Frame: Long-term ongoing study. Start in Summer of 2012.
- Longitudinal Design: for time series, cross-sectional, and cohort comparisons.
- Target Population: Present and future managers.
- Subjects are College Students (Full-time & Part-time) and Working Adults.
- Contact participants with help from: WSB-NLU Student Organization and Alumni Association.
- Data Collection Instrument: *Aspects of Identity Questionnaire* (AIQ-IIIx) formulated by Jonathan Cheek and his colleagues at Wellesley College (1994) provides items measuring personal, social, and collective identity. This instrument is in the public domain and can be used at no cost. Additional open-ended questions, as well as demographic items will be included in the complete questionnaire.
- Instrumentation in English and Polish. All respondents are given the choice of using either language—  
Need to establish equivalence of forms.
- Questionnaire administered online via Internet.

- Data Analysis: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is likely for quantitative data, but an adequate sample size is needed. Content analysis of qualitative (narrative) data.

### Constraints

- Limitations: Imposed by situational factors. Access to a sufficient number of managers and management students who are willing to participate in a substantial data collection session.
- Delimitations: Choices made by the researcher. Restricting the participant pool to Poles and Americans. People from other countries may be included in future studies.

### Potential Applications

- Theoretical: To the body of knowledge. There is a significant potential contribution to what is known about work identity formation.
- Practical: To organizational and personal development. This could help improve the specification of developmental pathways for enhancing individual and organizational performance.

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