

New Directions in Identity Control Theory*

Jan E. Stets

Peter J. Burke

University of California, Riverside

Abstract

Identity control theory has long posited that there are positive emotional consequences to identity verification and negative emotional consequences to the lack of identity verification (Burke, 1991). While some of the positive consequences of identity verification have been discussed (Burke and Stets, 1999; Cast and Burke, 2002), little work has been done to elaborate the variety of negative emotions that result for a discrepancy between meanings held in the identity standard and meanings perceived in the situation. This paper elaborates the nature of this discrepancy and hypothesizes the variety of negative emotions that arise depending upon the source of the discrepancy, the source of the identity standard, and the relative power and status of the actor and others in the situation. In this way, the emotional consequences of identity non-verification are shown to depend upon the context of the social structure in which the non-verification occurs.

1 Introduction

Identity control theory (ICT) had its beginnings almost 30 years ago with the development of a theoretically based measurement system to capture the meanings of the self in a role (Burke, 1980). The idea was formulated, based on traditional symbolic interaction views, that people choose behaviors, the meanings of which correspond to the meanings in their identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Tully, 1977). Over time, the simple theory of correspondence became elaborated and more fully developed based upon a systematic program of research (Burke, 1991; Stets & Burke, 2003), especially with the incorporation of ideas based on perceptual control theory (Powers, 1973). The theoretical development of the idea of an identity control system was central in that it provided a way of understanding the motivation underlying the actions of individual identity holders through the incorporation of goals. Essentially, individuals bring self-in-situation meanings into alignment with their self-defining meanings held in the identity standard when there is a discrepancy, and they maintain that alignment when there is no discrepancy.

*Published in *Advances in Group Processes*, 22:43-64, 2005

During the most recent past, researchers have incorporated several important features into ICT. First, the view of meanings was expanded to include not only symbolic meanings with which symbolic interaction had been identified, but also sign meanings as tied to resources, that is, things that function to sustain a person, an interaction, or a group (Burke, 1997, 2004a; Freese & Burke, 1994). Second, ICT was extended to include identities that are tied not only to roles (role identities), but also to groups or categories (social identities) and to the person as a unique individual (person identities) (Burke, 1997, 2004b; Stets, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). Third, the theory was developed to include the emotional reactions that people have in response to identity confirmation and disconfirmation (Burke, 1991, 2004a; Burke & Harrod, 2005; Stets, 2003b, 2004, 2005; Stets & Tsushima, 2001).

A fourth development was bringing the social structure, specifically one's status, into ICT to show its influence on the identity verification process (Cast, Stets, & Burke, 1999; Stets, 2004; Stets & Burke, 1996; Stets & Harrod, 2004). Fifth was the incorporation of the idea from James (1890) that people possess many identities that need verification (Burke, 2002, 2003; Stets, 1995; Stets & Harrod, 2004). These multiple identities are arranged in a hierarchical structure, with the output from an identity higher in the hierarchy being the reference or standard for an identity just below it (Burke, 1997; Burke & Cast, 1997; Stets & Carter, 2005; Stets & Harrod, 2004; Tsushima & Burke, 1999). Researchers also began to discover how individuals take on and lose identities, or more broadly, how identity standards slowly change with changing output of higher-level identities (Burke & Cast, 1997; Cast et al., 1999). Finally, to place more emphasis on interaction in dyads and groups, there was also the inclusion of the idea that in many social settings there are multiple persons, each with their own identities, all seeking to have all of their identities confirmed (Burke, 2005; Burke & Stets, 1999; Cast et al., 1999; Riley & Burke, 1995).

In all of the above developments, what has remained relatively unexamined is the nature of the discrepancy between the perceived self-relevant meanings in the situation and the self-defining meanings in the identity standard. In the present paper, we explore the nature of the discrepancy more fully as it is embedded within the social structural arrangements in which identities exist. We develop some hypotheses about the emotional consequences of variations in the nature and source of a discrepancy, when it exists. First, we briefly review the nature of identities as understood in ICT.

2 Identity Control Theory

2.1 Identities

Within ICT, an identity is the set of meanings that define who one is in terms of a group or classification (such as being an American or female), in terms of a role (for example, a stockbroker or a truck driver), or in terms of personal attributes (as in being friendly or honest). For the role identity spouse, for

example, the identity would include what it means to the individual to be a husband or wife. These meanings, which define who one is, serve as a standard or reference for assessing self-relevant meanings in the interactive situation. They represent what the self-relevant meanings in the situation should be.¹ Because these standards are the output of higher-level control processes, they are dynamic and changing, though at a slow rate usually measured in weeks or months. Actual meanings in the situation that are relevant to the self are perceived and compared to the standard by means of a mechanism that has been coined the comparator. The comparator measures the degree of correspondence between the two sets of meanings (those in the standard and those perceived in the situation).

Any differences or discrepancy between the meanings are represented in an error signal that both generates emotion and produces meaningful behavior or activity that changes meanings in the situation so that the error is reduced and the perceptions match the standard. When the discrepancy is large or increasing, people feel bad and they do something about it (Burke, 1991). When the discrepancy is small or decreasing, people feel good and continue to do what they are already doing. We illustrate this negative-feedback control system in Figure 1. The figure shows a representation of the identity standard, the perceptions of meanings in the situation, the comparator that compares the two sets of meanings, and the error (difference or discrepancy) which influences both emotions and behavior that changes the situational meanings.

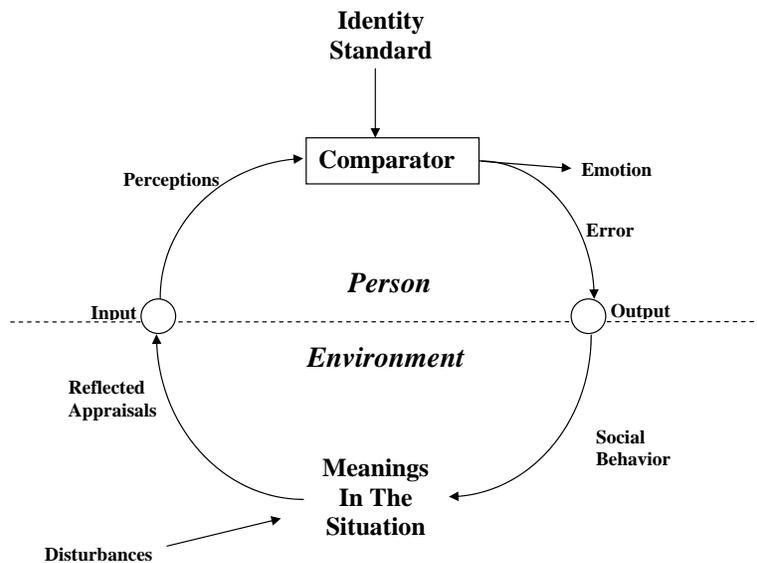


Figure 1: Basic Identity Model

¹The idea of a should is only meant to convey an imperative from the point of view of the individual holding the standard. What is unstated is how the individual acquired the standard.

In this paper, we discuss the nature of the discrepancy between the identity standard meanings and the actual meanings in the situation in an attempt to further understand and differentiate the various emotional consequences of that discrepancy. Because meaning is at the heart of both the identity standard and perceptions, we begin with a discussion of the nature of meaning in ICT.

2.2 Meaning

ICT follows the work of Osgood and his colleagues (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) in defining meaning as a bi-polar mediational response of a person to a stimulus. The dimensions along which the response occurs define the underlying dimensions of meaning. Osgood and his associates found that there are three primary dimensions consisting of evaluation (good-bad), potency (strong-weak), and activity (lively-quiet) that account for about 50% of the responses that people have. These primary dimensions cultures share. The other 50% of people's responses involve the multitude of other meanings, which vary across everyday situations but are important for understanding social life.

To illustrate the above, let us briefly discuss what it means to be a male. One might incorporate into his identity standard certain levels of evaluation and potency, but also many other aspects of masculinity and/or femininity having to do perhaps with levels of assertiveness, drive, emotionality and other characteristics. In addition to these more symbolic characteristics, being a male also conveys meanings in the resources that a male controls including the cars, tools, clothes, and the job he has. To be clear, culture provides the relevant dimensions of masculinity/femininity in which the individual exists, but the particular levels on the various aspects that make up masculinity/femininity in the culture are individually determined and vary from one person to another. In this way, all identities have a cultural component (with respect to the relevant dimensions for a particular identity) and an idiosyncratic component (given individual differences).

As mentioned earlier, the definition of meanings has been expanded to include the notion of resources that which functions to sustain the self and interaction. Recent theorizing has distinguished between active resources and potential resources (Burke, 1997, 2004a; Freese & Burke, 1994). Active resources currently support a person, role, or group such as air to breathe, a car that is transporting one to a destination, or current approval from one's boss on the job. Potential resources may be used in the future to support a person, role, or group such as food that will be later consumed or love that is forthcoming. Tied to active resources are signs that are responses to direct experiences that others do not share but allow individuals to control actual resources in the situation. It is through signs that persons perceive active resources. Tied to potential resources are shared symbols that are responses to anticipated experiences; these responses are stored in the form of conventional meanings that allow for interaction, communication, thought, and planning.

The distinction between signs and symbols is analytic. Empirically, they are less easily distinguished. For example, a pen is used to write with and is

controlled with signs obtained directly through sight and feeling to accomplish that writing a resource in use. At the same time, the pen may also have symbolic value conveying high status, for example, an expensive Mont Blanc with a gold nib and platinum inlay. All who see it understand that it represents the level of quality enjoyed by the rich and famous.

When the signs and symbols in the situation are congruent with the meanings in the identity standard, identity verification exists; the perceptions of the relevant meanings are the same as those held in the standard, and the error is zero. As mentioned above, the person feels good and continues to act as he or she has been acting. When there is a disturbance in the situation, that is, something changes the perceived meanings in the situation so that they no longer correspond to the meanings in the identity standard, the person feels bad and acts to change the meanings in the situation so that they correspond to those held in the standard. What governs what a person does and how the individual feels is the correspondence between the meanings in the identity standard and the perceived meanings in the situation.

3 The Nature Of The Discrepancy

The above simply discusses the correspondence between meanings in the identity standard and the meanings in the situation, and the effect of that correspondence on the individual's feelings and behavior. It would appear from that discussion that any difference is equivalent to every other difference of the same magnitude and has similar consequences. However, common experience suggests that not all discrepancies are equivalent. As we discuss below, because there is variation both in the source of the meanings in the identity standard (self or other) and the source of the discrepancy (self or other), different consequences may emerge for the self when these variations occur. In order to understand these potentially differences consequences, we extend ICT by developing a set of hypotheses about such differences.

3.1 The Source of Meaning

In thinking about the different sources of identity standard meanings, distinguishing between different types of identity standards is one way of understanding the different discrepancies that can emerge between self-in-situation meanings and identity standard meanings. Higgins and his colleagues (1987, 1989, 1985) have distinguished between "ideal" standards and "ought" standards. As identity standards, the ideal standards contain meanings that one aspires to maintain; ought standards contain meanings that one feels obliged to maintain. According to Higgins (1987, 1989, 1985), discrepancies between perceptions and meanings held in an "ideal" standard result in feelings of depression and dejection; one has not lived up to one's aspirations or ideals. Discrepancies between perceptions and the meanings held in an "ought" standard result in feelings of anxiety and agitation; one has not accomplished what one

was expected to accomplish. In this way different emotions arise from different kinds of discrepancies (Marcussen & Large, 2003).

Although Higgins frames his work in terms of different types of standards, we think it is more useful to consider the different sources of the meanings held in the identity standard. Keeping in mind that there are many dimensions of meaning for any one identity that is invoked in a situation, we conceptualize these various dimensions of meaning as rooted in the self or in others. When the self is the source of an identity standard meaning, individuals have essentially built a set of expectations that they hold for themselves in the identity. Such meanings may be unique or shared. What is important is that they have the additional meaning of belonging to the self. Alternatively, when others are the source of an identity standard meaning, while the meaning is part of the identity standard and therefore protected and verified, it does not belong to the self.

To illustrate the above, let us take the role identity of professor. The identity of professor carries with it many identity standard meanings, some of which are rooted in meanings defined by others and some of which are rooted in how the self defines being a professor. Identity meanings rooted in others, for example, may include keeping an active research program, publishing papers, and maintaining national visibility. Identity meanings rooted in the self may include, for example, being a very caring, helpful, and supportive mentor of students. A discrepancy between perceptions of relevant meanings in the situation and identity standard meanings rooted in the self would occur if the professor reads student evaluations that report that the professor is an insensitive, non-supportive teacher. Alternatively, a discrepancy between perceptions of relevant meanings in the situation and identity standard meanings rooted in others would occur if the professor fails at getting research grants or getting papers accepted for publication.

According to ICT, perceptions of relevant meanings in the situation derive themselves from reflected appraisals or how persons perceive that others see them in the situation. In the example above, this would be the professor perceiving students' feedback on his performance. Relying on reflected appraisals may be a limited view as to the basis of perceptual input because it neglects one's own appraisal as to how one is doing in the situation. Actors can ignore reflected appraisals, and instead, rely on their own perceptions of their performance as feedback. In the above example, for instance, the professor may discount the students' comments that he is a non-supportive teacher by concluding that the students are not privy to all that he does for his students, thus they are not in a position to evaluate the professor on that dimension of meaning. Thinking that one is more qualified than others to judge how he or she is doing in a situation may be one of several reasons as to why a person relies on his own perceptions rather than the perceptions of how he thinks others see him.

3.2 The Source of the Discrepancy

Identities locate one within the social structure in terms of the various role positions, group memberships, and personal attributes one has. In this sense,

identities are clearly social (Burke, 2004a), orienting not only a person or holder of an identity to maintain certain meanings, but others with whom the person comes in contact so that others know with whom (with what identity) they are interacting. When a person verifies an identity, he or she has altered meanings in the situation to bring them into alignment with his or her identity standard. Since others typically are in the situation, the meanings that a person changes to verify himself or herself may be the same meanings others need to verify their own identities. Thus, self-verification may cause a disturbance in the verification process for others in the situation if those meanings change in a way that no longer confirms their identities. Similarly, others may change meanings that are relevant to the verification of a person's identity and create a discrepancy between situational meanings and the person's identity standard.

One's relationship to others in the situation thus becomes critical for the self-verification process, and the nature of the relationship can change the consequences of any discrepancy that arises. In Figure 2, we provide a modification of the identity model showing the interaction of two identities in a situation. As the figure reveals, there are two sources of a potential discrepancy between an actor's identity standard and his or her perceptions of self-relevant meanings in the situation: the self and others.²

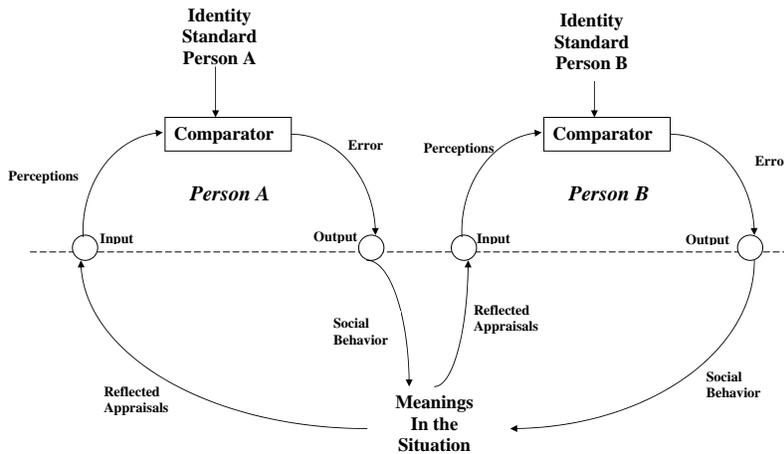


Figure 2: Identity Model for Two Interacting Persons

It is easy to see how others can disrupt the identity verification process for a person. Others can alter meanings in the situation such that they no longer correspond with the actor's identity standard, thereby causing conflicting goals (for self and other) in a situation. For example, employees may expect their

²A third source may exist which we label nonsocial factors such as situational exigencies and circumstances. For example, unexpected events may arise in a situation such as natural disasters or environmental hazards, thereby disrupting the perceived match between meanings of the self in the situation and identity standard meanings. In this paper, we limit our discussion to the self and other as the source of identity discrepancies.

female boss to be less feminine than how the woman defines herself (in terms of her gender) on the job, and the employees may act on this, thus changing situational meanings. However, it is more difficult to see how the self can disrupt its own identity verification process.

There are at least three ways in which the self can act as a disturbance to its own verification process. First, when an individual acts to reduce a discrepancy and verify his or her identity, it is possible that more than one identity is salient in the situation such that the verification of one identity results in a lack of verification of the other identity. The identities are in conflict with each other in the sense that their standards have different levels on some dimension of meaning (Burke, 2002). For example, in an interaction, a young person may be in the presence of both a friend and her parents. While she may want to display her "worldliness" to her friend, she may also want to show her "innocence" to her parents. When interacting with her friend (in the role identity of friend) and with her parents (in the role identity of daughter), acting to verify one identity will necessarily create a discrepancy with the other identity. Thus, the source of the discrepancy is the self in that a person has multiple identities, which are simultaneously competing for verification.

A second way in which the self may create a discrepancy is through accidental or inadvertent actions. The perceived meanings that result from such actions are inconsistent with the identity standard meanings. For example, when one accidentally spills a glass of red wine on a light colored suit, the person is spoiling the symbolic representation of oneself through the wearing of certain clothes (Stone, 1962). Alternatively, by accidentally tripping, one shows a level of ineptness not held in one's identity standard as a competent person, thereby creating an identity discrepancy.

A third way in which the self is the source of an identity discrepancy is through unintended consequences of intended actions. In general, the self acts in ways to control certain meanings to maintain self-verification. However, sometimes the results of these actions unwittingly negate identity verification. For example, Stets and Burke (2005) have shown that when one member of a couple attempts to increase their control over the other in order to get the other to verify their spousal identity, especially through the use of aggression, the consequence can be a decrease in the level of verification that the other provides.

3.3 Emotional Outcomes

Given that both the source of the identity meanings (self or other) and source of the discrepancy (self or other) are important in understanding the nature of identity discrepancies because of the additional meanings they provide, we anticipate that different emotional experiences will result from different combinations of self-other meanings and discrepancies. Table 1 reveals this, and we express it in the following hypotheses:

H1: When the source of meanings is the self and the source of the discrepancy is the self, the self will experience emotions ranging from disappointment to sadness.

H2: When the source of meanings is the other and the source of the discrepancy is the self, the self will experience emotions ranging from embarrassment to shame.

H3: When the source of meanings is the self and the source of the discrepancy is the other, the self will experience emotions ranging from anger to rage.

H4: When the source of meanings is the other and the source of the discrepancy is the other, the self will experience emotions ranging from annoyance to hostility.

| Source of Discrepancy | Source of the Meanings | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Self | Other |
| Self | Disappointment – Sadness | Embarrassment – Shame |
| Other | Anger – Rage | Annoyance – Hostility |

Table 1: Emotional Responses by the Source of the Discrepancy and the Source of the Meaning

In general, actors take responsibility for the identity standard meanings and the discrepancy that may emerge in the situation (an internal attribution), or they do not take responsibility for the identity meanings and discrepancy (an external attribution). Blaming the self for not being able to verify one’s identity standards, whether those standards are set by the self or others, usually involves a negative evaluation of the self as “bad,” and directs negative feelings inward (Row 1 of Table 1). Blaming others for not being able to verify one’s identity standards keeps intact the evaluation of the self as “good,” and redirects negative feelings outward, onto others (Row 2 of Table 1).

Internal attributions that one is responsible usually involves a family of related feelings ranging from the milder emotion of disappointment to the stronger emotion of sadness in not living up to one’s own expectations, and from embarrassment to shame in one’s own failure to meet the internalized expectations of others. The external attribution that others are responsible involves related feelings that range from anger to rage at having someone else cause the failure to meet one’s own expectations, and from annoyance to hostility when someone else is responsible for the actor’s failure to meet the internalized expectations of others (Lewis, 2000; Tangney, 2003). In each cell in Table 1, we suggest that there is a range of emotion (from weak to strong) on that dimension.

Earlier theorizing on identity discrepancies and emotion maintained that we should think of emotions in terms of their intensity, with less intense emotions

more likely to be felt when a disrupted identity is less prominent to a person, and when a person is not very committed to the identity (Burke, 1991). Alternatively, a disrupted identity that is highly prominent and that a person is highly committed to would generate a more intense emotional response. We think that an improvement on this relationship would be to regard identity prominence and commitment as important because they influence the intensity of the emotions experienced, but to recognize that a less intense emotion feels very different compared to a more intense emotion. For example, a less intense state of sadness is disappointment and this feels very different compared to a more intense state of sadness such as depression. In general, in keeping with recent research that has suggested that more work is needed on how social psychological theories can inform us about specific emotions that individuals experience (Stets, 2003a), we are attempting to link particular identity discrepancies to particular emotional states.

We point out that these different emotional states yield outcomes that are conducive to reducing the likelihood of further discrepancies, thereby maintaining self-other relationships. By turning inward when the self is the cause of the discrepancies, the self is motivated to manage identities and behaviors in ways that are less likely in the future to lead to discrepancies. By turning outward and directing negative feelings to others who are the cause of the discrepancies, one makes others more likely to change their identities and behaviors to prevent future discrepancies for the actor.

4 Extending The Nature Of The Discrepancy

4.1 The Dimensions of Status and Power

Thus far, we have dealt with generic forms of self-other interactions and the emotional consequences of discrepancies that occur when identities lack verification. We turn now to bring specific social structural features into ICT by extending our analysis on the nature of the discrepancy to discuss how one's position in the social structure, in terms of status (esteem and respect) and power (control of resources), acts to provide additional meanings that influence the emotional consequences of identity disconfirmation. Changes in status and power are at the heart of Kemper (1991), Lovaglia and Houser (Houser & Lovaglia, 2002; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996), and Thamm's (2004) theorizing about emotions. However, unlike Kemper (1991), we do not see an absolute change in status or power in the situation as that which determines one's emotional responses, but rather, a change in status and power meanings relative to the status and power meanings that are held in the identity standard. Additionally, following Thamm (2004), we suggest that not only does the source of the discrepancy make a difference in the emotional response to the discrepancy, but also the relative status and power of others that may be present in the situation.

Unlike Thamm, however, who views status and power in absolute terms, we view status and power in relative terms. This is in keeping with the symbolic

interactionist perspective of ICT in which the interaction process is understood through the eyes of the actor. Thus, status is relative to the actor's status, and power is relative to the actor's power. A further distinction between our work and the work of Thamm is that Thamm maintains that at the root of the emotional experience is whether, given cultural expectations, one receives rewards or punishments. However, in ICT, rewards and punishments are defined in terms of the actor's identity-verification process. That which aids the identity verification process is a reward, while that which disturbs or prevents identity verification is a punishment. Thus, rewards and punishments are not exogenous to the process.

Like the work of Lovaglia and Houser, who draw upon Turner's (2000) evolutionary view, we see the emotional responses as primarily integrative in the sense of facilitating identity verification in the present and future. Unlike Lovaglia and Houser, however, we view the emotional reactions not to status or power per se but to the additional meanings that power and status provide when identities are not verified.

In Table 2 and 3, we identify the different emotional experiences that are a consequence of discrepancies resulting from the actions of self or other, the status of the other in the situation (Table 2), and the power of the other in the situation (Table 3). Consistent with the placement of these emotions in these tables, we offer the following hypotheses:

H5: When the source of the discrepancy is the self, the self will experience shame when the relative status of the other in the situation is higher than the self, embarrassment when the relative status of the other is equal to the self, and discomfort when the relative status of the other is lower than the self.

H6: When the source of the discrepancy is the other, the self will experience anxiety when the relative status of the other in the situation is higher than the self, annoyance when the relative status of the other is equal to the self, and hostility when the relative status of the other is lower than the self.

| Source of Discrepancy | Relative Status of Other | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | Higher | Equal | Lower |
| Self | Shame | Embarrassment | Discomfort |
| Other | Anxiety | Annoyance | Hostility |

Table 2: Emotional Responses by the Source of the Discrepancy and the Relative Status of the Other in the Situation

H7: When the source of the discrepancy is the self, the self will experience sadness when the relative power of the other in the situation is higher than the self, disappointment when the relative power of the

other is equal to the self, and displeasure when the relative status of the other is lower than the self.

H8: When the source of the discrepancy is the other, the self will experience fear when the relative power of the other in the situation is higher than the self, anger when the relative power of the other is equal to the self, and rage when the relative status of the other is lower than the self.

| Source of Discrepancy | Relative Power of Other | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | Higher | Equal | Lower |
| Self | Sadness | Disappointment | Displeasure |
| Other | Fear | Anger | Rage |

Table 3: Emotional Responses by the Source of the Discrepancy and the Relative Power of the Other in the Situation

The emotions in Table 2 and 3 include the feeling states typically associated with internal attributions (row 1 in each table) and external attributions (row 2 in each table) as revealed in Table 1. Also included in Table 2 and 3 but not included in Table 1 are the emotions of anxiety and fear, which we think emerge when the other is the source of one’s identity discrepancy and the other is of high status or power. In each row in Table 2 and Table 3, the feeling states become milder as one moves from the other in the situation being higher in status or power, to equal status, to the other being lower in status or power when the self is the source of the discrepancy. Indeed, there is more at stake in a situation when the other has higher status or power than the self than when the self has higher status or power than the other. Thus, the emotions should be stronger. However, when the other is the source of the discrepancy, there are shifts in the tone of the emotion from anxiety to hostility (going from higher to lower status), and from fear to rage (going from higher to lower power) as the feelings become more externalized.

As in Table 1, the emotional states in Table 2 and Table 3 are consistent with the idea that the information about the source of the discrepancy and the relative status and power of the other provide additional meanings for the actor. These additional meanings as to the source of the discrepancy and the relative status and power of the other yield emotions and behaviors that reduce the present discrepancy, future discrepancies, and attempt to keep intact the self-other relationship.

Earlier, we argued that identity prominence and commitment influence emotions that range from weak to strong. Here, we maintain that one’s status and power relative to another in an interaction also will influence the type of emotion individuals will experience. When we incorporate identity prominence and commitment into a situation that we can distinguish along status and power lines, we can expect a further differentiation regarding the type of emotions

that will emerge. For example, if another is the source of one's identity discrepancy, the other is higher in power, and the disrupted identity is of high prominence and commitment, the self may feel terror rather than fear. Alternatively, if the disrupted identity is of low prominence and commitment, the self may simply feel a little scared. Future research will want to test whether the emotions emerge in situations in the manner described above.

4.2 The Three Bases of Identity

Another way to extend the analysis of the nature of identity discrepancies is to examine the emotional outcomes that result from identity discrepancies that occur for social (group-based) identities, role-based identities, and person-based identities. As noted elsewhere (Burke, 2004a), identities formed on each of these bases have different consequences when there is identity verification. Past work has shown that verifying a social or group-based identity signifies that the person is like others in the group and belongs with those others. This leads to acceptance by others in the group as a legitimate member who is like other members (Stets & Burke, 2000). Such results lead to increased feelings of self-worth and solidarity.³

Verifying a role-based identity signifies that the person is competent and skillful in the role, meeting the expectations of the self and others (Stets & Burke, 2000). This increases feelings of efficacy and pride in one's accomplishments. Since most roles are embedded in some group or organization, the successful performance of the role also connotes worthiness in the group and thus may increase feelings of self-worth. Finally, verifying a person identity signifies that one is in fact who one claims to be, meeting one's own expectations and aspirations for the self, qua self. Past work has suggested that this leads to increased feelings of authenticity and happiness (Burke, 2004a). What we now need to outline is the emotional responses associated with identity disconfirmation. We offer the following three hypotheses:

H9: Non-verification of a group-based identity will lead to feelings ranging from embarrassment to shame.

H10: Non-verification of a role-based identity will lead to feelings ranging from feeling discomfort to guilty.

H11: Non-verification of a person-based identity will lead to feelings ranging from occasional sadness to depression.

When a discrepancy arises with respect to a social or group-based identity, there is the threat of rejection by the group, especially if the discrepancy occurs in the presence of other group members, or it emerges by other group members failing to confirm the actor's identity in the group. If the identity is low in

³In situations where there is more than one group, verifying a group identity not only makes one like others in one's own group, but differentiates one from other groups by making clear what is not me (McCall, 2003).

prominence and commitment, the self is likely to feel embarrassed, but if the identity is high in prominence and commitment, the self is likely to feel shame. The outward focus of these emotions encourages the self to do something about the discrepancy and obtain verification to remain a part of the group.

Since role-based identities have to do more with what one does rather than acceptance as to who one is as in group-based identities (Stets & Burke, 2000), emotions should occur that focus on having done something that disrupts the identity verification process. Whereas feelings of shame (and its family of related emotions) focus on not meeting up to the expectations of others, with the entire person evaluated negatively, feelings of guilt (and its close relatives) address having done a bad thing, thus the person's behavior, rather than their entire self, is evaluated negatively (Lewis, 2000; Tangney, 2003). Therefore, we expect that if the disrupted role identity is low in prominence and commitment, the self should feel discomfort, but if the role identity is high in prominence and commitment, the self should feel guilty. Again, with either result, the actor is motivated to both restore identity verification as well as prevent future discrepancies from arising.

Finally, person identities relate to verifying the "real self. Because they are activated across situations, roles, and groups, they are more likely to be prominent. Further, because more people know the individual in terms of the characteristics of the person identity, there is more commitment to person identities. With the higher prominence and commitment come stronger emotional responses to problems in verification. We anticipate that the lack of verification of person identities will range from occasional sadness for low prominent and committed person identities to depression for high prominent and committed identities. The inward focus of these emotions helps to motivate the changes in identities and behaviors that will result in future success in verification.

4.3 Mutual Verification Contexts

A further way in which we examine the nature of identity discrepancies is within mutual verification contexts. In earlier work, Burke (1991) argued that individuals feel more intense emotional arousal when their identities are disrupted from a significant other compared to a non-significant other. According to Burke, significant others are those with whom one has built up a set of mutually verified set of behaviors and identity standards. Burke and Stets (1999) introduced the term "mutual verification contexts" to recognize these situations in which each of two or more actors mutually support each other by not only verifying their own identities, but in doing so help in the process of verifying the identities of others in the situation. For example, a married couple often develop a mutual verification context in which each partner not only verifies his or her own spousal identity, but in doing so help to maintain their spouse's identity (Burke & Stets, 1999). Close relationships often result because the meanings and resources controlled by each identity help to reinforce and facilitate the meanings and resources controlled by other identities in the situation. A mutual verification context is very stable and results in positive emotions and

feelings of trust and commitment among the members (Burke & Stets, 1999). These emotions and feelings produce a context in which, up to a point, people will work harder to restore mutual verification than they would otherwise. However, beyond that point, as we discuss below, people's emotional reactions may be stronger and have stronger consequences than they would otherwise.

When an identity is not verified by the actions of a close other in a mutual verification context, one is likely to take the view that this is the result of the lack of information on the part of the other, or alternatively, it is an accidental or inadvertent outcome that one initially is not to be very upset about. Individuals seek ways to change meanings or resources to levels that maintain the mutual verification context. This is in the interests of everyone so that all identities are maintained. We thus offer the following hypothesis:

H12: If the discrepancy is not large or not persistent in a mutual verification context, the feeling of annoyance will manifest itself that help members restore the mutual verification context.

However, if the lack of verification continues or recurs, or if the other is perceived as intentionally disturbing one's own verification process, bewilderment, anger, or even rage may result that is all the more intense for two reasons. It will be intense because the mutual verification situation is a well-established identity process that has become interrupted and the interruption of well-established identity processes is more distressful than interruption of less well-established processes (Burke, 1991). Second, because it is a mutual verification context, interruption occurs in the verification process of all of the identities in the situation, leading to strong negative reactions. The mutual verification context may become a mutual war and lead to the demise of the verification context. In larger groups, there may develop local mutual verification contexts among subgroups that are at odds with other subgroups, which have their own mutual verification contexts. Such bifurcations develop new in-groups and out-groups as new structures emerge. We thus hypothesize that:

H13: A discrepancy in a mutual verification context that is large or persistent and caused by another will result in feelings of anger.

H14: A discrepancy in a mutual verification context that is large or persistent when caused by the self will result in feelings of depression.

5 Discussion

During the past 10 years, ICT as a theory has undergone considerable development. We know more about the different bases for the identities individuals hold (group, role, and person), the emotional responses of individuals to identity confirmation or disconfirmation, identity change, and the intersection of multiple identities and multiple persons in situations, with the goal of identity verification for all involved. However, there is still much work to do, and this paper has discussed some new directions for ICT.

While identity processes themselves, within the scope of ICT, are psychological, dealing with the perceptions and emotions of an active agent, these are necessarily set within the context of a social structure of relations between individuals, groups, and institutions, and within a context of an existing culture. The issues we discussed for future research bring the individual, the social, and the cultural together. We propose the examination of the location of individuals within the social structure and the additional meanings that location conveys when those individuals experience identity discrepancy.

At the core of ICT is an identity, which is a set of meanings that define who one is. Meanings are the medium of both communication and interaction and identity verification. Symbolic meanings arise in the culture and reflect characteristics of the social structure and social processes embedded within it. Individuals adapt them to the extent that they allow communication and interaction among persons who share the meanings in common groups, interconnected roles, and socially relevant personal characteristics.

The meanings that define persons as individuals, role players, or group members are identity standards. The identity verification process manipulates these meanings in the social situation to make them congruent with the identity standards. Discrepancies between situational meanings and identity standard meanings generate emotional responses that facilitate behavior. Behavior reduces the discrepancies to bring about identity verification, but it also accomplishes role performances, maintains the groups, or displays appropriate personal characteristics upon which others may rely.

By understanding the nature of the discrepancy and the varieties of emotional response that accompany discrepancies, we have better knowledge about the ways in which identities both reinforce and change the social structure in which they exist. The way identities are embedded in the social structure places "additional meanings" into the situation, which influence the responses and actions people take in response to discrepancies between situational meanings and meanings held in the identity standard. These "additional meanings" locate the actors within the social structure: in groups, roles, and relationships, and modify responses to the discrepancies that help to maintain and sometimes change the social structure.

The first distinction we make is the most basic: between self and other in the situation. We make this distinction both for the source of the meanings held in the identity standard (this is who I want to be or this is who I am expected to be), and the source of the situational meanings that create the discrepancy (the self causes the discrepancy or others cause the discrepancy). Each of these elements, when combined, adds meaning to the situation and changes the emotional reactions to the discrepancy. We predict that these emotional responses motivate the individual to act in ways that protect the actor from further discrepancies, thereby sustaining the interactive setting. For example, the actor might withdraw, rethink the situation, or modify behaviors or identities if the self caused the discrepancy. Alternatively, the person might behave more aggressively to change others, if they were the source of the discrepancy. These

reactions are stronger if the source of the standard is the self rather than the other.

We then extend this analysis to consider other structural features of the situation including the status and power of the other, the type of linkage to others (through group memberships, role relationships, or personal characteristics), and the establishment of close bonds through the development of mutual verification contexts. In each case, we hypothesize that the emotions and behaviors result from the combination of the discrepancies and the additional meanings conveyed by the particular structural context in which they occur. We further hypothesize that these emotions and behaviors are particularly suited to both reducing the immediate discrepancies and preserving the structural relationships that help define the identities involved. People do not just "feel bad" when there is an identity discrepancy and they do not just act to reduce the discrepancy. The particular emotions and actions that they generate are the ones that best serve to reduce the discrepancy and preserve the social structural relations within which the identities exist.

6 References

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