Identity Negotiation

A Theory of Self and Social Interaction

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Only in man does man know himself. .
—GOETHE, *Torquato Tasso*, Act 2, Scene 3

The survival of people's identities rests not only in their own hands but in the hands of others. Whereas people who enjoy a steady supply of nourishment for their identities will retain those identities, those who repeatedly fail to receive such nourishment will ultimately relinquish their identities. The term "identity negotiation" refers to the processes through which people work to obtain such nourishment. This chapter offers a rudimentary theory of identity negotiation.

By "identity" we mean thoughts and feelings about the self, or self-views. Two broad classes of identities or self-views exist. "Personal self-views" refer to qualities that make people unique and distinct from others (e.g., intelligence, dominance). "Social self-views" refer to roles, group memberships, and other qualities that people share with others (e.g., American, Democrat).[1] These dual components of identity are integrated by personal narratives that organize and contextualize people's self-knowledge into a dynamic, coherent, and internally consistent whole (McAdams, 1999; see also Chapter 8, this volume). Thus, identity can be concep-

tualized at varying levels of specificity, ranging from relatively specific self-views to the larger self-narrative that is "more than the sum of its parts" (cf. Bosson & Swann, in press).

But identities are not merely historical repositories of past actions, accomplishments, and liaisons; they also regulate action. In particular, identities systematically influence the personas people assume in specific contexts, as well as the conditions under which they assume them. Generally speaking, people avoid personas that are disjunctive with important identities, preferring instead personas that exemplify their enduring conceptions of who they are.

The process of identity negotiation has several components, one of which includes those self-presentation processes people perform in the service of establishing who they are. Identity negotiation cannot be equated with self-presentation, however. Self-presentational activity represents a collection of behavioral tactics designed to achieve various interaction goals (e.g., Jones & Pittman, 1982). In contrast, the process of identity ne-

gotiation refers to a much broader set of processes through which people strike a balance between achieving their interaction goals and satisfying their identity-related goals, such as the needs for agency, communion, and psychological coherence. To this end, people generally conform to various principles of identity negotiation (discussed later in this chapter) that not only facilitate smooth interpersonal interactions but also promote intrapersonal harmony. Furthermore, the motivational forces that regulate identity negotiation processes remain operative well beyond the cessation of self-presentational activity. When, for example, people encounter identity-discrepant evaluations or are compelled to behave in identity-discrepant ways, they may "see" the experience as offering more support for their identity than it actually does. In this way, biases in people's modes of thinking can ensure the survival of identities that have been challenged. As a result, these identities may guide behavior once again.

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The intellectual seeds of the identity negotiation formulation were sown by several influential sociologists during the middle of the last century. Goffman (1959, 1961), for example, asserted that the first order of business in social interaction is establishing a "working consensus" or agreement regarding the roles each person will assume. Weinstein and Deutschberger (1964) and later McCall and Simmons (1966) elaborated these early themes. Within psychology, ideas related to identity negotiation were introduced by Secord and Backman (1965) and expanded upon by Swann (1983) and Schlenker (1985). I (W. B. S.) used the phrase "identity negotiation" to refer to the process of reconciling two competing forces in social interaction (Swann, 1987). One influence originates with "perceivers," who use their expectancies to guide their behavior toward "targets," thereby encouraging targets to provide behavioral confirmation for their expectancies (e.g., D. T. Miller & Turnbull 1986; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Snyder & Swann, 1978; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). A counter-influence originates

with targets, who strive to bring perceivers to treat them in a manner that provides verification for their identities (Secord & Backman, 1965; Swann, 1983, 1999).

The mutual give and take that occurs between perceivers and targets means that the process of identity negotiation is a fundamentally interactionist phenomenon. As do other interactionist approaches, the process of identity negotiation merges two competing themes that dominated psychology during the last century: behaviorism and personality theory.

Behaviorist Approaches

Behaviorist approaches emphasize the roles of environmental and situational factors in shaping behavioral tendencies. In psychology, this emphasis is exemplified by Pavlov's and Watson's work on classical conditioning, as well as Skinner's (1974) work on operant conditioning, and, within personality, the work of Hull (1943) and N. E. Miller and Dollard (1941). Although the various behaviorist approaches differ in the attention they devote to internal processes such as genetic endowment, basic drives, and cognitions, they share an assumption that most (if not all) behavior is under the control of the external environment. Thus, to understand stable behavior, these perspectives suggest that one must look to the individual's particular history of conditioned, reinforced, and punished reactions.

In sociology, the behaviorist perspective appears in Cooley's (1902) and Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionist approaches, as well as Goffman's (1955) dramaturgical approach and the behavioral sociology approach to interaction (Burgess & Bushell, 1969; Homans, 1974). According to symbolic interactionism, personality is constructed through social interactions in which people internalize feedback from significant relationship partners. As such, personality is shaped largely by external forces, especially the reactions of others to the self. Similarly, according to the dramaturgical approach, people are performers who play out various social roles as if on stage. Rather than reflecting inherent dispositional qualities, personality reflects the roles that people enact within specific contexts, as well as the techniques that they use to manage the impression they

make on observers. Related ideas can be found in the writings of sociological role theorists (Stryker & Statham, 1985), as well as behavioral sociologists who apply Skinnerian principles of reinforcement and exchange principles of asset negotiation to the study of human social interaction.

Behaviorist themes emerged with renewed vigor in the late 1960s. Within social psychology, Bem (1967) critiqued dissonance theory; within personality psychology, Mischel (1968) criticized trait approaches. Mischel's critique was especially influential, triggering the decades-long "person–situation" debate (see Kenrick & Funder, 1988).

Personality Approaches

In contrast to behaviorism, personality approaches emphasize the role of dispositions in shaping people's behaviors. Aristotle presaged modern personality approaches by proposing that all objects possessed a natural "essence," or fundamental set of properties that guided their activity (Lewin, 1931/1999). According to Aristotle, an object's behavior was driven entirely by its essence. From this perspective, although changing situations might "disturb and obscure the essential nature" of the object (Lewin, p. 57), they do not explain its behavior.

Contemporary theorists are unlikely to invoke Aristotle, but echoes of essentialism can be found in some modern trait theories (for a discussion, see Haslam, Bastian, & Bissett, 2004). Proponents of the Big Five model, for example, suggest that, to a degree, extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness reflect genetically heritable tendencies that are expressed in predictable emotional and behavioral patterns (Costa & McCrae, 1994; Goldberg, 1981; John, 1990). By focusing on inborn (genetic) qualities that shape personality patterns across the lifespan, contemporary trait approaches reveal essentialist assumptions that are generally absent from behaviorist and situationist approaches.

As do personality theorists, self theorists generally emphasize the role of stable psychological structures in shaping individuals' behaviors and outcomes. Indeed, people's self-views constitute an important component of personality. As examples, self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 1990,

1999) and its predecessors (Lecky, 1945; Secord & Backman, 1965) hold that people are strongly motivated to preserve their chronic self-views. To this end, people prefer and seek evaluations and relationship partners that confirm their beliefs about the self, and perceive the world in a manner that maintains a stable sense of self. As a result, once people's self-views are formed, these self-views may continue to guide and shape behavior.

Interactionist Approaches

Interactionist approaches view behavior as arising from an interaction of persons and situations. As noted by Jones (1998), some threads of interactionist thinking have been evident in most psychological theorizing since the inception of the field. Still, some theorists have clearly been more influential than others in promoting and popularizing the idea of the person–situation interaction.

Lewin's (1951) field theory proposed the interactionist assumption that behavior is a function of the "life space," or the interdependent relationship between the person and his or her environment. Lewin's thinking was influenced by a Galilean approach to science, in which both an object and its surroundings are considered equally important determinants of the object's behavior (see Lewin, 1931/1999). In Lewin's conceptualization, behavior is "always derived from the relation of the concrete individual to the concrete situation" (p. 65). Such interactionist assumptions can be found in the work of personality and social psychologists alike, including Erikson (1959), Sullivan (1953), Endler and Magnusson (1976), Swann (1983), Snyder and Ickes (1985), John and colleagues (John, Hampson, & Goldberg, 1991), Michel and Shoda (1999), and McAdams (1999). Within sociology, interactionism is evident in the work of Thomas, who argued that people both shape and are shaped by their experiences (Thomas & Thomas, 1928), and McCall and Simmons (1966), who emphasized the tendency for people to maximize interpersonal harmony by gravitating toward social settings that are likely to offer support for their identities. Although these theorists differ in the extent to which they explicitly invoke the language of interactionism, all emphasize the interplay of stable features of persons and the immediate pressures of situ-

ations in shaping identity and behavior (see Swann & Seyle, 2005).

The identity negotiation formulation follows in the interactionist tradition in that it assumes that behavior grows out of the interplay between self, situation, and other. This approach is exemplified in the merger of (1) self-verification theory with (2) the symbolic interactionist and expectancy theory approaches. In the tradition of self-verification theory, we assume that people's identities (especially their stable self-views) guide their choices of social partners and situations, the relationship goals they pursue in their social interactions, and their interpretations of, and reactions to, the feedback they receive. In the tradition of the symbolic interactionist and expectancy theory approaches, we assume that the reactions of others to the self exert a powerful influence on people's identities, both in the short term and more permanently.

THE NATURE OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

For most people, the word "negotiation" calls to mind those processes that occur when people strive to reach agreements regarding the exchange of materials, expertise, or services. Such "asset negotiations" have been the subject of several decades of careful analysis by researchers within both social psychology (e.g., Rubin & Brown, 1975) and organizational behavior and decision making (Lempert, 1972–1973; Thompson, 2005). Here we detail some of the primary similarities and differences between asset and identity negotiations.

Function and Ubiquity

The most striking difference between asset and identity negotiation is in the function that the two sets of processes serve. Whereas asset negotiations regulate the exchange of commodities, identity negotiation establishes the personas that each person will assume in a relationship. Usually, asset negotiations require that identity negotiation has already occurred. That is, before assets can be negotiated, negotiators must first initiate a process of identity negotiation. Once established, the mutual identities of the negotiators channel and constrain their subsequent response op-

tions. From this vantage point, identity negotiation is a critically important prelude to asset negotiations. In fact, identity negotiation processes are typically the first step in the formation of *all* relationships, including those that involve no asset negotiation whatsoever. For this reason, identity negotiation processes are far more common than asset negotiations.

In addition to these differences in functional properties and relative ubiquity, asset and identity negotiation also have different structural properties. Differences in underlying motivation, communication channel, and longevity are especially important.

Motivation

Because asset negotiations are designed to accomplish a specific material goal (e.g., establishing the price that a buyer will pay a seller for a product), the motives that fuel such negotiations are typically explicit and easy to recognize. In highly competitive contexts, asset negotiations may involve a zero-sum dynamic, in which one party maximizes his or her own personal outcomes at the expense of the other. In these cases, both parties may be preoccupied with "looking out for #1." More often, however, at least some modicum of cooperation benefits both parties. Even in business contexts, which are often stereotyped as "ruthless," negotiators are typically motivated to cooperate (Thompson, 2005; Walton & McKersie, 1965).

The motivations that fuel identity negotiations as compared to asset negotiations are generally far less explicit. In part, this lack of explicitness may reflect the fact that the "resources" being exchanged during identity negotiations are abstract psychological qualities that cannot be quantified or readily compared. That is, whereas asset negotiators are tasked with reaching agreements on tangibles such as the market value of merchandise, identity negotiators must agree on the personas that each person will assume in the interaction. Furthermore, the motivations that drive asset versus identity negotiations also differ in how distant they are from the resources being negotiated. Whereas agreeing on the resources that each party will receive is the ultimate goal of asset negotiations, agreeing on the personas that each party will assume is *not* the ultimate goal of the identi-

ty negotiation process. Instead, negotiating a public persona is merely a means to the larger ends of maintaining and nourishing one's self-views as well as meeting other important identity-related needs.

Although identity negotiations are potentially influenced by a wide range of motives, three identity-related needs may play especially important roles in the identity negotiation process: *agency* (which encompasses feelings of autonomy and competence), *communion* (which encompasses feelings of belonging and interpersonal connectedness), and *psychological coherence* (which encompasses feelings of regularity, predictability, and control). The basic human needs for agency and communion are assumed to underlie many aspects of personality and social behavior (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Wiggins & Broughton, 1985), and theories of optimal functioning emphasize the importance of meeting both needs (e.g., Ryff, 1989). Similarly, humans have a need for psychological coherence (Guidano & Liotti, 1983; Popper, 1963); indeed, the mental and physical health of those who lack coherence tends to suffer (e.g., Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Angulo, 2007).

It is easy to see how people might gratify each of these motives through the process of identity negotiation. For example, to gratify their desire for agency, people will negotiate identities that reflect the self-views that make them unique from others (i.e., their personal self-views). To satisfy their desire for communion, people will negotiate identities that reflect the self-views that link them to other people (i.e., their social self-views). Finally, to gratify their desire for coherence, people will seek identity-consistent feedback and experiences (i.e., information that fits with their stable self-views).

Of course, people cannot always meet all of these needs simultaneously, nor is it always essential that they do so. For example, people who recognize their powerlessness in a given situation may (wisely) refrain from pursuing their agency needs, whereas those who are suspicious of their partner's motives may refrain from pursuing their desire for communion. Furthermore, conflicts may sometimes emerge between various motives, as when an identity linked to a personal self-view (e.g., "independent") clashes with

an identity linked to a social self-view (e.g., "family man"). The identity negotiation formulation suggests that most people learn to negotiate identities in ways that minimize tensions between their needs for agency, communion, and coherence. For example, the family man may meet his need for agency by negotiating a self-reliant identity in the context of his business, and at the same time meet his need for communion by negotiating a warm and involved identity in his relationships with his family. In each context, he may also meet his need for coherence by seeking verification of the (independent or warm) identity that he negotiates.

Communication Channel

The channels of communication through which asset versus identity negotiations flow will often vary in explicitness. Generally speaking, asset negotiations are quite explicit and purposeful, often occurring during interactions that have clearly demarcated beginnings, end points, and agendas. In contrast, the process of identity negation is often implicit, informal, and open-ended. Moreover, whereas asset negotiators emphasize verbal over nonverbal communications and commitments, identity negotiators are likely to use both communication channels (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & McNulty, 1992).

Related to this point, because identity negotiations take place during everyday social interactions wherein many behaviors are overlearned and automatic (Bargh & Williams, 2006), people may engage in identity negotiations without consciously realizing that they are doing so. Thus, whereas asset negotiators are most likely consciously aware of the negotiation process from start to finish, identity negotiators may instead shift into and out of awareness of their ongoing negotiations. This point is reflected in Swann's (1987) notion of routine versus crisis self-verification, as well as McAdams's (1999) ideas regarding the waxing and waning of the self-narrative process. Both authors note that the process of establishing identities tends to become routine and recedes from consciousness once identities have been successfully negotiated, only to return to consciousness during times of change, disruption, and/or challenge.

Thus, people may only become aware that they want others to recognize and validate a given identity when they receive information that suggests that others see them in an identity-discrepant manner. From this vantage point, feedback that causes an individual to question his or her identity, rapid and unpredicted life changes, and novel environments or negotiation partners may all bring identity negotiations to the fore of an individual's consciousness. In this sense, the motives that drive identity negotiations may resemble those psychological and physical need states (e.g., hunger, thirst, loneliness) that enter awareness only when the relevant need is not being met.

Longevity

On balance, asset negotiations will persist only as long as the agreements and exchanges that they are designed to support. Sometimes these negotiations may remain in effect for very short periods; sometimes they may last for years or even decades. In contrast, identity negotiations should persist as long as the relationships between the relevant parties persist. As noted above, however, ongoing identity negotiations may be imperceptible to outsiders if the identity-relevant behaviors of the interaction partners are routinized. Even the interaction partners themselves may not realize that an identity negotiation is underway, given the tendency for such negotiations to become automatic and to fade from consciousness.

PRINCIPLES OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION PROCESSES

The foregoing discussion suggests that identity negotiation is a special case of negotiation processes that is unique in its function, ubiquity, and structural properties. Given these distinctive qualities, it is not surprising that a unique set of principles governs the identity negotiation process. People presumably learn these principles in the same way that they learn all rules of social interaction: through a process of trial and error (Athay & Darley, 1980; Goffman, 1959). As noted above, people routinely conform to these principles even though they are seldom aware of them.

Rather, their adherence to these principles typically occurs automatically and implicitly (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Although there could be many such principles, we focus here on four of the most fundamental.

Clarity

Ambiguity regarding matters of identity and relationship goals can be misleading, put partners off balance, undermine trust, and produce disappointing outcomes. Hence, the first principle of interpersonal identity negotiation: One should clearly communicate one's desired identity and relationship goals to one's partner. To ensure clarity, identity negotiators should know the content and importance of their desired identity and interaction goal(s), and communicate these to their partner as early in the interaction as possible. Moreover, identity negotiators should communicate their desired identity and relationship goals via as many channels of communication as possible, because redundancy provides partners with corroborating information and thereby diminishes the probability of misunderstanding and conflict. Thus, for example, people may simultaneously communicate their identities through verbalizations and through the display of *identity cues*: overt signs and symbols of who they are (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980; Swann, 1983). Such cues may range from T-shirts to titles and honorifics (e.g., "Dr."), to bedroom and office décor (Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, & Morris, 2002). The use of such redundant cues can facilitate the clarity with which identities are communicated.

Of course, maximal clarity is only possible or desirable insofar as people are certain about the identity that they want to negotiate. If someone is uncertain of a given identity, either for situational reasons (e.g., the situation is a novel one) or dispositional reasons (e.g., the individual is low in self-concept certainty) (Pelham, 1991), then clarity may suffer. In such circumstances, people can often achieve clarity by looking to their interaction partner for cues regarding the identity that he or she expects them to assume. When this occurs, people are particularly likely to adopt identities that provide behavioral confirmation of their partners' expectations (e.g., Snyder & Klein, 2005; Snyder & Swann, 1978).

Cooperation

Identity negotiators should cooperate with their partners by honoring the identities that they negotiate, as well as the identities that their partners proffer. One obvious way to uphold the cooperation principle is to behave in an identity-consistent manner throughout a given interaction. In this way, negotiators can avoid identity renegotiation, which can be highly disruptive and may undermine the interaction goals of one or both partners.

For identity negotiators to convey the impression that they are following the cooperation principle, the timing of their behaviors can be critical. Often, identity negotiations resemble asset negotiations in that people may bargain back and forth in an offer–counteroffer fashion (e.g., Athay & Darley, 1980; Goffman, 1959; Homans, 1974). In such scenarios, people may uphold the cooperation principle by following each concession on their partner's part with a concession of their own (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981). For example, after receiving feedback indicating that one's partner accepts one's desired identity, one should reciprocate by accepting the identity that one's partner offers. Such reciprocal concessions should reinforce the mutual confirmation of identities that provides the basis for successful identity negotiation.

Although the foregoing discussion may imply that identity negotiations typically consist of equally weighted contributions on the part of each negotiator, this is often not the case. At times, negotiators are strongly invested in identities that their partners are reluctant to honor. At other times, negotiators may enter interactions with strongly held expectations about a partner's identity, only to discover that their partner has different ideas about who he or she is. In such cases, cooperation is still possible, provided that both parties are able and willing to be flexible. In general, to the extent that a negotiator's investment in a given identity is high, cooperation is facilitated by the partner's willingness to acquiesce and offer identity-consistent appraisals. Conversely, to the extent that the partner is strongly invested in his or her expectations, cooperation is facilitated by the negotiator's willingness to conform to those expectations. When both the negotiator and his or her partner are strongly invested in conflicting perceptions of one another's identities, cooperation may not be possible, and both parties are likely to be dissatisfied with the outcome of the negotiation.

Continuity

People expect their relationship partners to be fairly predictable and consistent across time (Athay & Darley, 1981; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). Thus, in addition to honoring the identity that one negotiates within the context of a given interaction (the cooperation principle), people will maximize interpersonal harmony if they also negotiate a consistent identity, within a given relationship, across time. That is, people should remain faithful to the identities that they negotiate in the context of ongoing relationships with specific others.

A challenge to the continuity principle may occur when people mature, shift status, or change in some way. Such changes can pose problems for relationship partners, because they will be forced to choose between assimilating the new identity to an existing one, renegotiating a new identity, or leaving the relationship. Often, such transitions are finessed through cognitive gymnastics that are designed to maximize the apparent overlap between the old and new identities (at least from the perspective of the one undergoing the change). One such strategy is discussed by McAdams (1996, 1999), who suggests that people may organize multiple identities around overarching cognitive or affective themes. For example, themes of cooperation may characterize many of the identities people strive to negotiate with close relationship partners, providing cognitive unity to the multiple roles that they enact. Similarly, people may imbue their various identities with a common affective tone, such as optimism, humor, pessimism, or passive acceptance. Using such higher-level cognitive and affective schemas, people may perceive continuity between two or more identities that outside observers might construe as conflicting. We elaborate upon this idea in the next section.

Cognitive gymnastics notwithstanding, problems may emerge when sudden identity changes occur that cannot be finessed, or when interaction partners do not perceive the continuity that individuals are able to impose on their own identities. For example, when

one partner suddenly loses an interpersonal asset such as a job or status, that partner may become financially dependent on the other partner. Such reversals may turn the power dynamic in the relationship on its head, and this shift may have important reverberations for the respective identities of each partner. If such identity discontinuity cannot be repaired fairly quickly, partners will be forced to renegotiate the relevant identities.

Compatibility

Often, people know one another in two or more contexts that call for distinct identities. For example, married people may know one another not only as spouses but also as parents, colleagues, and tennis partners. When negotiating distinct identities with a given partner, negotiators should ensure that these identities are compatible with one another and with previously negotiated identities. Given the premium that people place on predictability and consistency in their relationship partners, someone who elicits appraisals of "bookworm" in one context and "college girl gone wild" in another context may be perceived as unreliable and therefore undesirable as a partner. If people want to negotiate different identities with the same partners, they can do so successfully only insofar as the appraisals associated with the different identities are not inconsistent either logically (e.g., Democrat vs. Republican) or emotionally (e.g., friend vs. adversary).

INTRAPSYCHIC MECHANISMS THAT HELP SUSTAIN IDENTITIES

Accompanying identity negotiation processes are a host of intrapsychic processes that shape how individuals interpret and react to the outputs of their identity negotiations. For the most part, these intrapsychic mechanisms enable people to maintain a sense of personal continuity even in the face of identity-discrepant feedback from others. Thus, both within a given negotiation and across different negotiations, people tend to perceive stability and regularity in their own identities and those of others. For example, as noted above, people who undergo identity change may perceive continuity between the old and new identities by organizing both identities

according to certain cognitive or affective themes. In this section of the chapter, we identify seven intrapsychic mechanisms that foster identity continuity and regularity by shaping how identity negotiation processes unfold.

Selective Attention

In general, people pay more attention to interpersonal feedback when they expect it to confirm their identity than they do when they expect it to disconfirm their identity (Swann & Read, 1981). As such, people may fail to notice feedback that is inconsistent with their identity and relationship goals. Moreover, when people are confronted with identity-threatening feedback that cannot be ignored, they respond by focusing more attention on their firmly held self-views (e.g., Dodgson & Wood, 1998). This tendency may serve to reinforce identities that have been challenged during identity negotiations, thus reducing the likelihood of identity change.

Discounting

When confronted with feedback that is inconsistent with their self-views, people tend to discount both the validity of the feedback (Korman, 1968; Markus, 1977) and the credibility of the evaluators who offer it to them (Shrauger & Lund, 1975; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987). In some cases, such discounting might allow identity negotiators to remain untroubled by inconsistent feedback. In other cases, discounting may motivate identity negotiators to break off relations with the source of the identity-discrepant feedback, as when an interaction partner repeatedly displays such poor judgment.

Biased Interpretation

People's need for coherence and regularity may compel them to "see" more identity-consistent feedback than they actually receive during identity negotiations. Indeed, humans possess a powerful ability to interpret incoming information in a manner that is consistent with their prior knowledge. Interestingly, some propose that a particular region of the brain is responsible for such activity. Gazzaniga (1998), for example, suggests that a

"left-hemisphere interpreter" drives humans' tendency to impose coherence and continuity on their conscious experiences (see also McAdams, 1997).

Anxiety as Information

Of course, if interpersonal evaluations are to be internalized, they must fall within the individual's latitude of acceptance (Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, & Skelton, 1981). Information that falls within the latitude of rejection will garner extra scrutiny. If the discrepant information pertains to a highly certain and central self-view or comes from a highly credible source, it may produce anxious arousal (Lundgren, & Schwab, 1977; Mendes & Akinola, 2006; Wood, Heimpel, Newby-Clark, & Ross, 2005), which will motivate behaviors designed to neutralize the threat posed to the identity in question (Burke, 1991; Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Angulo, 2007). Anxiety can thus signal to individuals that a given interaction partner poses a threat to their enduring beliefs about themselves.

Biased Recall

In general, people show better recall for identity-consistent feedback than they do for inconsistent feedback (Crary, 1966; Greenwald, 1980; Swann & Read, 1981), and they tend to recall past feedback as being more consistent with their self-views than it really was (Story, 1998). Thus, even if people receive identity-inconsistent feedback that they cannot ignore, discount, or reinterpret, they may still sustain their self-views—and thus meet their need for coherence—by forgetting the threatening feedback or misremembering its content.

Thematic Coherence

When individuals negotiate multiple identities in the context of a single relationship or across multiple different relationships, they may increase the underlying coherence and logic of the various identities through a process that McAdams (1996, 1999) refers to as "selfing." As noted earlier, people may increase compatibility by structuring their multiple identities around underlying themes

and narrative tones. For example, themes of agency and communion are prevalent in many people's identities, providing cognitive unity to the multiple roles that they enact. In a similar manner, distinct identities often share a common affective tone, such as optimism, humor, pessimism, or sorrow. Thus, the person who behaves somewhat differently and pursues different relationship goals across his or her various identity negotiations with a given partner may still maintain intrapsychic coherence by linking all of his or her identities to underlying concerns about competence and connectedness, or by imbuing the different identities with a similar affective tone.

Compartmentalization

Cognitive compartmentalization may be another mechanism through which some people achieve continuity among the different identities that they negotiate. People differ in the extent to which they organize their self-views into different cognitive compartments or *self-aspects* (Linville, 1985; Showers, 1992). Whereas some people's self-concepts contain a few broad self-aspects that encompass most of their specific self-views, other people organize the contents of their self-concept into numerous, nonredundant self-aspects (e.g., "student self," "religious self," "self at home"). Importantly, experiences that activate a given self-aspect should prime associated self-views. Therefore, people higher in self-complexity—those who organize their self-views into numerous nonredundant self-aspects—may find it easier to negotiate multiple distinct identities without experiencing threats to their sense of continuity.

For instance, if a professor's "self at work" self-aspect contains the qualities "introverted" and "submissive," whereas her "self at home" contains the qualities "outgoing" and "exuberant," she may find it relatively easy to negotiate each of these disparate identities in its own context. For this woman, even though her work and home identities differ, interactions in each separate context will activate primarily those self-views that are relevant to the current negotiation. Thus, when people negotiate very different identities with their different relationship partners, those with more complex

self-structures should be less troubled by feelings of incompatibility. At present, however, this idea remains speculative.

A PROCESS MODEL OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

In this section we highlight some of the key links in the chain of events that make up the identity negotiation process. The process model of identity negotiation depicted in Figure 17.1 will guide our excursion. This model explicates the dynamically interrelated roles of self-views, relationship goals, situations, and others' appraisals in guiding identity negotiations and their outcomes. Along the way, we also illustrate how identity negotiators apply the interpersonal principles and intrapsychic mechanisms described above. Note that the processes described here presumably operate both in new relationships and in long-term, enduring relationships.

The Person's Initial Identity and Relationship Goals

The model begins with the initial identity and relationship goals. As noted earlier, "identity" refers to personal and social self-views, along with the narratives that people superimpose on their self-knowledge to foster a more consistent and coherent sense of self. "Relationship goals" are the desired end states for which people strive when they enter social interactions. These goals can be defined at various levels of specificity. At the broadest level, people strive to meet their needs for agency, communion, and psychological coherence. Depending on the nature of the relationship (e.g., Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), these broadly defined goals may also give rise to various midlevel goals such as self-verification, ingratiation, and self-promotion (Jones & Pittman, 1982), as well as specific goals such as garnering the affections of a particular person.
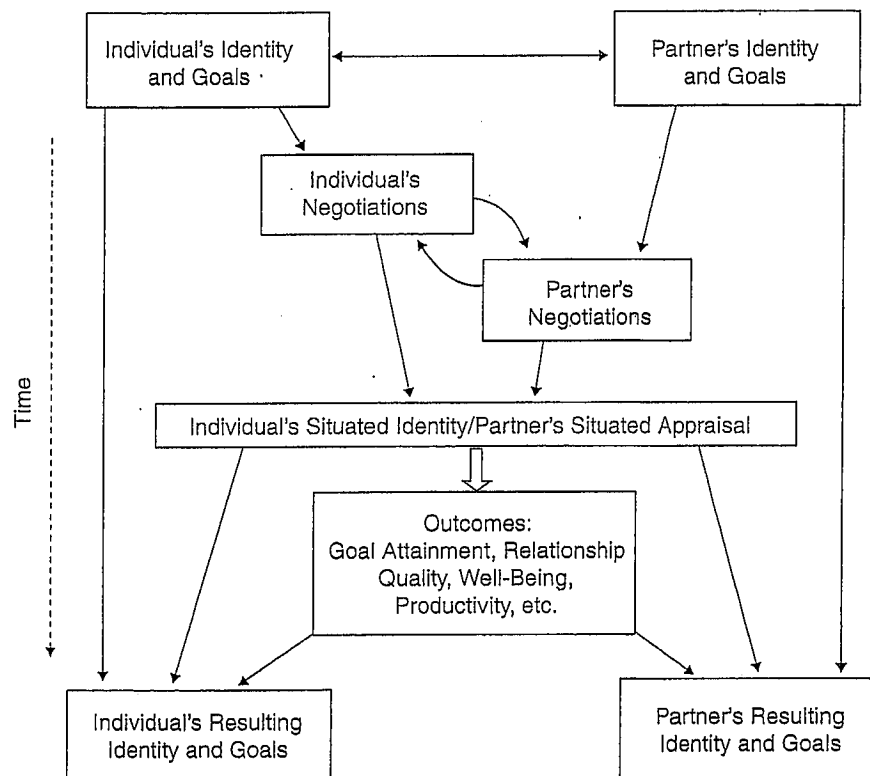

FIGURE 17.1. A process model of identity negotiation across time.

Peoples' initial identities and relationship goals should guide them toward certain environments and situations. Indeed, all organisms gravitate toward environments—or "opportunity structures" (e.g., Hawley, 1950; McCall & Simmons, 1966)—that routinely satisfy their needs (e.g., Clarke, 1954; Odum, 1963). For example, people's identities may guide them toward certain vocations, living environments, hobbies, and leisure activities, thereby ensuring that the experiences they routinely encounter are ones that support and buttress their chronic identities (cf. Caspi & Roberts, 1999). Moreover, people may choose interaction partners who seem similar to them (Byrne, 1971; Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, & Pyszczynski, 2006) or who seem to like them (Lowe & Goldstein, 1970; Sprecher, 1998).

Interestingly, the evidence that people prefer partners who like them may reflect a desire for appraisals that verify people's identities. Because the majority of people in unselected samples have positive self-views, for most people positive evaluations (e.g., appraisals that indicate that one is liked) will be more self-verifying than will negative evaluations. When researchers *do* measure participants' self-views, evidence of self-verification strivings emerges even among people with negative self-views. For example, a recent meta-analysis of self-verification in marriage relationships revealed that people enjoyed superior relationship quality if their spouses perceived them in a self-verifying manner (Chang-Schneider & Swann, 2007), and this was true whether people's self-views were positive or negative. Furthermore, people display such strivings at the level of personal self-views (Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989), collective self-views (Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004; Chen, Shaw, & Jeung, 2006), and group identities (e.g., Gómez, Seyle, Huici, & Swann, 2007; Lemay & Ashmore, 2004).

The Partner's Initial Identity and Relationship Goals

Because negotiations involve (at least) two individuals, all identity negotiations are shaped by the joint contributions of both parties. Thus, the partner's initial identity and relationship goals play integral roles in determining the outcomes of identity nego-

tiations. For instance, as noted above, partners' identities and goals will compel them to enter certain environments and opportunity structures, and to avoid others. Once both parties have entered the relationship, the identity negotiation process can begin in earnest. To this end, people will systematically deploy a host of interpersonal identity negotiation strategies.

Negotiations between the Person and the Partner

People may communicate their identities before they even open their mouths by displaying identity cues. For example, flashy sports cars that communicate wealth and confidence or ripped jeans that convey a laid-back and nonmaterialistic approach to life will project a particular identity to one's partner. Moreover, consciously or not, people tend to arrange and design their dorm rooms, offices (Gosling et al., 2002), homes (Sadalla, Vershure, & Burroughs, 1987), and personal websites (Vazire & Gosling, 2004) in ways that elicit identity-consistent evaluations from others. Of course, people also convey their identities to others through direct verbal communications. For example, the shy, unadventurous bookworm who wants her new college roommate to see her as such may note that "I'm not much of a partygoer. I'll probably spend most nights studying in the library."

Upon communicating their identities, negotiators must wait for their partner's counteroffer and then respond accordingly. If a negotiator's roommate responds to her displays of her introverted identity with "Don't be shy! Come to the party with me and I'll introduce you to people," the negotiator must then decide whether to utilize a more forceful behavioral strategy or acquiesce to the partner's counteroffer. One possibility is to reassert her introversion by behaving in an even more introverted fashion (Stets & Burke, 2003). For example, it was found that self-proclaimed submissives exaggerated their submissiveness when interacting with a confederate who ostensibly perceived them as dominant (Swann & Hill, 1982). Specifically, self-proclaimed submissives who thought they were perceived as dominant behaved in a substantially more submissive manner than did submissives who thought they were perceived as submissive.

According to the clarity principle discussed earlier, identity negotiators should use as many channels of communication as possible to convey their desired identities to interaction partners. The use of multiple channels may be especially helpful when people encounter resistance in bringing others to see them congruently. Returning to the example above, the introverted negotiator may increase the likelihood that her roommate will come to see her as shy if she supplements her verbalizations with nonverbal cues such as speaking in hushed tones, allowing her hair to fall into her face, and adopting an anxious expression each time her roommate invites her to a party. Moreover, the shy negotiator may communicate her intention to "power study" by stacking piles of books on her desk, sprinkling study guides and daily organizers throughout the apartment, and highlighting exam dates and paper deadlines on her calendar.

In response to the negotiator's amplified efforts to elicit an identity-consistent appraisal, her roommate must now make another counteroffer. In keeping with the cooperation principle, the roommate should acquiesce to the negotiator's wishes and offer behaviors that validate her preferred (i.e., introverted) identity. For example, the roommate may back down and stop insisting that they attend social events together. Furthermore, both parties may cooperate by following each concession on the other's part with a concession of her own. For example, if her roommate agrees to view her as an introvert, the negotiator may reciprocate by redoubling her efforts to honor the roommate's extraverted identity.

As their relationship unfolds across time, both parties should uphold the continuity principle by remaining faithful to their negotiated identities. Thus, the negotiator should continue to play the role of the introvert in her dealings with her roommate. Were she to host a wild, drunken party one night, this behavior could justifiably be viewed by the roommate as a breach of their interpersonal contract, and the roommate might "retaliate" by refusing to accept the negotiator's claim to an introvert identity.

The fourth principle of identity negotiation states that people should strive to maintain compatibility among the various identi-ties that they negotiate with a given partner. In our ongoing example, this means that the identity the shy individual negotiates with her roommate in their apartment should be compatible with the identities that she negotiates with her roommate elsewhere. Insofar as the negotiator wishes to negotiate a more outgoing identity with her roommate in other contexts, she may maintain compatibility by seeking appraisals of herself that are only slightly more outgoing than the appraisals she seeks from her roommate when they are at home.

Intrapsychic Mechanisms

As noted earlier, the identity negotiation processes described above work hand-in-hand with a parallel set of intrapsychic mechanisms. These cognitive (e.g., attention, interpretation, and recall) and affective (e.g., anxiety in response to challenges to an important identity) mechanisms both accompany and sustain people's identity negotiations.

Consider the scenario in which a shy woman tells her roommate that she dislikes parties, and her roommate nonetheless encourages her to attend the evening's soiree ("Don't be shy! Come to the party with me and I'll introduce you to people"). In this case, the negotiator may interpret her roommate's offer to introduce her to people at the party as an acknowledgment of her social awkwardness rather than as a refusal to view her as introverted. Because interpersonal feedback is often ambiguous and open to interpretation, most people have little difficulty maintaining coherent and stable identities even when faced with interaction partners who view them in identity-inconsistent ways. If the inconsistency is too great to ignore, however, it will threaten the negotiator's need for coherence, which will produce unsettling feelings of anxiety. Such feelings should prompt identity negotiation strategies that are designed to correct the partner's inaccurate appraisals.

Intrapsychic processes facilitate continuity not only between a negotiator's self-views and the appraisals he or she receives from others, but also between the different identities that a person negotiates with the same partner. Consider a person who negotiates a highly introverted identity with her

roommate in their home environment, and a mildly introverted identity with her roommate in the context of their larger social group. Despite this discrepancy, she may nonetheless maintain intrapsychic coherence by linking both of these identities to her underlying concerns about connectedness and intimacy or personal competence and academic achievement. Such cognitive gymnastics can even harmonize strikingly distinct identities. If a negotiator is outgoing and exuberant around her mother but shy and retiring around her roommate, she may increase the compatibility of these divergent identities by imbuing both of them with a tone of ironic humor. Furthermore, the negotiator may cognitively compartmentalize her different identities such that the specific self-views associated with each identity become salient primarily during interactions with the relevant partner.

The Person's Situated Identity

As shown in Figure 17.1, the identity negotiation processes and intrapsychic mechanisms described above jointly produce people's situated identities. A "situated identity" is a person's identity within a specific, circumscribed situation (Alexander & Knight, 1971). This idea is related to the notion of the working self-concept (Markus & Kunda, 1986), in that it is the currently active portion of a person's identity.

Note that people's situated identities reflect not only their own behavioral, cognitive, and affective contributions to the identity negotiation process, but also the contributions (e.g., feedback, verbal and nonverbal reactions) made by their partner, as well as the constraints imposed by the situation. Therefore, a negotiator's situated identity will sometimes overlap minimally with his or her initial identity. The discrepancy between a negotiator's initial and situated identities may be greater to the extent that the negotiator (1) is uncertain or unclear about the identity being negotiated (Campbell et al., 1996; Maracek & Mettee, 1972; Pelham & Swann, 1994; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann, Pelham, & Chidester, 1988); (2) places relatively little importance on the negotiated identity (Markus, 1977; Pelham, 1991; Swann & Pelham, 2002); or (3) is low in self-awareness or self-consciousness (Ma-

jor, Cozzarelli, Testa, & McFarlin, 1988). Similarly, identity-discrepant feedback from a partner who is high in certainty or credibility should be particularly powerful in shaping a negotiator's situated identity (e.g., Josephs, Bosson, & Jacobs, 2003; Swann & Ely, 1984). Finally, situational influences that are exceptionally strong (e.g., emergencies, powerful authority figures or interaction goals, novel environments) or that provide unambiguous self-relevant information (e.g., obvious failure at a task, repeated doses of credible feedback) can also foster significant discrepancies between a negotiator's initial and situated identities. In part, situations can influence the overlap between initial and situated identities by activating people's communion needs. Those whose situation elicits a powerful need to belong may be willing to negotiate situated identities that differ substantially from their initial identities. We return to this idea shortly.

The Partner's Situated Appraisal

"Situated appraisals" are the impressions of negotiators that their partners develop as a result of identity negotiation processes. In general, identity negotiation processes will unfold more smoothly to the extent that partners' situated appraisals match negotiators' situated identities, because partners who achieve such matches will be better able to predict negotiators' reactions and behaviors within the circumscribed context of their relationship (Swann, 1984). Nevertheless, at times partners' situated appraisals will clash with negotiators' situated identities. In such instances, the identity negotiation process may end in a stalemate, with neither party willing (or able) to broker an agreement regarding the identity that the negotiator is to assume (Major et al., 1988). When this occurs, both parties are likely to feel dissatisfied with the outcome of the interaction.

In cases in which the criterion for the success of the identity negotiation process is the quality of the relationship between the negotiator and his or her partner, the match between the negotiator's situated identity and the partner's situated appraisal may be more important than the match between the negotiator's situated and initial identities. If, for example, the well-being of a relationship depends on one partner eliciting from the

other uncharacteristically positive evaluations on a given dimension, negotiators may temporarily seek such evaluations and forgo their need for verification of their chronic self-views. In such cases, people may prioritize feedback that matches their "better than normal" situated identity over feedback that matches the identity they assume in most of their relationships.

A case in point is represented by people involved in short-term, relatively tenuous dating relationships. The very survival of such provisional relationships hinges on maintaining the interest of the partner. For this reason, people in dating relationships may negotiate whatever identity they feel is necessary to keep the relationship alive, even if it requires seeking feedback that is more favorable than the feedback they typically seek. That is, identity negotiations in dating relationships may be driven powerfully by people's communal needs, even at the expense of other important motives.

Consistent with this reasoning, Swann, Bosson, and Pelham (2002) found that when people held the goal of winning the love of a romantic partner, they sought appraisals of their physical attractiveness that were more positive than their chronic self-perceived attractiveness would · warrant. More interestingly, people who negotiated highly attractive situated identities tended to elicit matching (i.e., highly attractive) situated appraisals from their partners. They did so, in part, by presenting themselves to their partners in a physically attractive manner. Thus, when people's relationship goals demand that they prioritize the fit between their situated identity and situated appraisal by seeking highly favorable feedback, they accordingly arrange it so that their partners develop—and they thus deserve—such positive evaluations.

In the short run, such harmony between the negotiator's situated identity and the partner's situated appraisal ensures that the identity negotiation process unfolds smoothly. In the long run—for example, in marriage relationships—a situated identity that receives reinforcement may become part of the negotiator's permanent identity. Alternatively, negotiators in long-term relationships may renegotiate identities that better reflect their stable self-views (e.g., Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994).

Negotiation Outcomes

Once negotiators and their partners have established situated identities and appraisals, they will have achieved a "working consensus" (Goffman, 1959). At this point, the stage is set for people to work toward the goals that initially brought them into the interaction, such as collaborating on a work project, forging a romantic relationship, cohabitating peacefully, or negotiating assets. To the extent that negotiators' situated identities are consistent with their initial relationship goals and their partner's situated appraisal of them, they should be well positioned to achieve the outcomes they desire. Several such outcomes are relationship quality, psychological well-being, and work productivity.

Relationship Quality

With regard to relationship quality, the self-verification literature shows that people's satisfaction with their long-term relationships increases to the extent that their partners view them in an identity-confirming manner (i.e., their situated identity corresponds closely to both their initial identity and their partner's situated appraisal of them). For example, when married people's spouses see them as they see themselves, they are more intimate and satisfied with their spouses and are less likely to get divorced (for a review, see Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Angulo, 2007). Presumably, congruent appraisals foster predictability and manageability in the relationship, which may not only improve the likelihood that people can achieve their relationship goals (e.g., raising children), it may also be psychologically comforting. Such psychological comfort may, in turn, reap physiological dividends in the form of reduced anxiety. From this vantage point, self-verification has an affective regulatory function that may be well served by the identity negotiation process.

Well-Being

There is some indication that a lack of correspondence between people's situated identities and their partners' situated appraisals increases negative emotions and promotes maladaptive psychological and physiologi-

cal outcomes. For example, Burke (2004) reported that identity-disconfirming events in the context of marital relationships increased people's distress for up to 2 days following the events. Similarly, Wood and colleagues (2005) found that low self-esteem participants felt anxious and concerned when confronted with success, apparently because success feedback was inconsistent with their identity (cf. Lundgren, & Schwab, 1977). Finally, Mendes and Akinola (2006) observed participants' cardiovascular responses to positive and negative evaluations that either confirmed or disconfirmed their self-views. When people received positive feedback, those with negative self-views became physiologically "threatened" (distressed and avoidant). In contrast, when they received negative feedback, people with negative self-views became physiologically "challenged" or galvanized (i.e., aroused, but in a manner associated with approach motivation). People with positive self-views displayed the opposite pattern.

If positive but nonverifying experiences are stressful for people with negative self-views, then over an extended period such experiences might prove to be physically debilitating. Sure enough, several independent investigations support this proposition. An initial pair of prospective studies (Brown & McGill, 1989) examined the impact of positive life events on the health outcomes of people with low and high self-esteem. For high-self-esteem participants, positive life events (e.g., improvement in living conditions, getting very good grades) predicted increases in health; among people low in self-esteem, positive life events predicted *decreases* in health. This finding was recently replicated and extended by Shimizu and Pelham (2004). These researchers discovered that positive life events predicted increased illness among people low in self-esteem, even when controlling for negative affectivity, thereby undercutting the rival hypothesis that negative affect influenced both self-reported self-esteem and reports of symptoms. Apparently, for people with negative self-views, the disjunction between positive life events and their chronically negative identity may be so psychologically threatening that it undermines physical health (cf. Iyer, Jetten, & Tsivrikos, in press).

Work Productivity, Job Retention, and Absenteeism

Recent research suggests that identity negotiation processes can influence outcomes in the workplace. For example, studies of small work groups suggest that, to the extent that individual group members bring their compatriots' appraisals of them in line with their identities, both individuals and groups benefit. Specifically, individuals who elicited identity-congruent appraisals were more committed to the group and performed better than those who did not (Swann, Kwan, Polzer, & Milton, 2003; Swann, Milton, & Polzer, 2000; see also London, 2003). Furthermore, when workers' identities are disconfirmed by the appraisals that their superiors offer them, they may actually leave their jobs. In a large-scale field study of workers in Texas, the investigators found that among employees with high self-esteem, those who received no pay raises were most apt to quit their jobs. In contrast, among employees with low self-esteem, attrition was highest among those who received raises (Schroeder, Josephs, & Swann, 2006). Apparently, employees become dissatisfied and leave their jobs when they receive professional feedback—in the form of financial compensation—that is inconsistent with their long-standing identities. People's identities may even influence their reactions to justice in the workplace. Whereas people with high self-esteem responded to high levels of procedural justice with high commitment and low rates of absenteeism, people with low self-esteem showed no such preferences (Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner, & Bartel, 2007).

In short, the outcome of the identity negotiation process, in general, and the fit between a person's situated identity and his or her partner's situated appraisal, in particular, have important implications. When people are seen as they see themselves, they enjoy superior relationship quality and duration, exhibit heightened psychological and physical well-being, and are even more productive and satisfied in the workplace.

Resulting Identity and Relationship Goals

The final step in the model depicted in Figure 17.1 consists of both parties' identities and relationship goals at the conclusion of a given iteration of the identity negotiation

process. Although both the negotiator's and partner's resulting identities will usually resemble their initial identities, to a large degree, it is also possible for an identity to shift during the identity negotiation process. In this sense, the identity negotiation model allows for and explains both identity stability and identity change.

The foregoing discussion points to at least five conditions that will increase the probability of permanent (or at least long-term) identity change: (1) the aspect of identity being negotiated is relatively unimportant or uncertain to the person; (2) interpersonal feedback or experiences fall outside the negotiator's or partner's latitude of acceptance (and thus cannot easily be assimilated into preexisting identity); (3) feedback or experiences are difficult or impossible to dismiss (e.g., feedback comes from a highly credible source or is patently obvious); (4) feedback or experiences that are inconsistent with the person's initial identity nonetheless produce outcomes that are perceived as highly desirable; and (5) the social environment lacks opportunity structures (e.g., social networks, physical and psychological resources) that are necessary to sustain a given identity. In the next section, we discuss several factors that precipitate these conditions.

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION AND IDENTITY CHANGE

Up to this point in the chapter we have emphasized the importance of congruence in the perceptions of identity negotiators and their partners, especially when these perceptions match the negotiator's chronic (initial) identity. By implication, changes in identity appear to be unwelcome phenomena that can confuse or even derail the process of identity negotiation. Yet as disruptive and painful as identity changes may sometimes be, they are a natural, unavoidable, and critically important part of life (Marcia, 1980; Robins, Noftle, Trzesniewski, & Roberts, 2005; Whitbourne, 1986). In fact, although some changes in identity are triggered by events over which the negotiator has no control, other changes are triggered by changes in the negotiator him- or herself, some of which are intentional. Here, we consider several different cases of volitional and nonvoli-

tional identity change that reflect, to varying degrees, the five conditions of change listed above.

Sociocultural and Idiosyncratic Contextual Changes

Changes in widespread normative expectations may have a profound impact on how people construe their identity. For example, the civil rights and women's liberation movements in the United States altered cultural expectations and behavioral norms for blacks and women, respectively. Such changed expectations and norms subsequently impacted the identities of members of these groups, as happened when the women's liberation movement led men and women alike to relinquish stereotyped conceptions of women as weak and dependent (e.g., Spence, Deaux, & Helmreich, 1985). These widespread changes in gender stereotypes produced corresponding changes in girls' and women's identity-relevant feedback, experiences, opportunity structures, and outcomes.

People may also encounter changed expectations and behavioral norms when their immediate culture changes rapidly. A particularly dramatic example of such idiosyncratic culture change occurs when people enter "total institutions" (Goffman, 1961), or institutions such as prisons, mental hospitals, and military bases in which all aspects of personal life are controlled and regulated by authorities. In total institutions, those in power theoretically isolate people from their families and friends and systematically program their environments so as to encourage adoption of a new identity (Berger & Luckman, 1966). In general, such institutions are rarely successful in transforming the core identities of those who are disinclined to change (Schein, 1961). Rather, the success of this approach is limited to relatively modest, short-term alterations of behaviors and identities that are of a more peripheral nature.

Environmental Changes

Dramatic identity changes can occur when people shift their social networks by, for example, entering college or moving to a new town or country (e.g., Iyer et al., in press). Such shifts produce identity change for a va-

riety of reasons (see Hormuth, 1990). First, as with the contextual changes described above, new environments inevitably provide people with new expectations and behavioral norms that can produce corresponding changes in identity. Furthermore, novel environments tend to increase people's self-focused attention, which over time can bring about identity change as new self-knowledge is acquired and new self-standards are applied.

Finally, new environments may not afford the opportunity structures that once nurtured and sustained an identity. In such cases, people who (for whatever reasons) fail to *remoor* their identity to a new social structure that resembles the old one will most likely experience identity change (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). For example, some (Sageman, 2004) have speculated that the initial link in the chain of events that led to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 was set in place when a group of foreign students visited Europe and failed to receive the warm reception that their past successes had led them to expect. So rebuffed, they sought refuge by affiliating with a group of fellow visitors who happened to embrace political views that were far more radical than their own moderate views. Over time, they gradually became more and more aligned with a jihadist group, culminating in the fusion of their personal identities with the social identities associated with this new group (e.g., Swann et al., 2008). The consequences of this identity fusion process were catastrophic.

Developmental Growth and Role Changes

One common source of identity change is set in motion when the larger community recognizes a significant change in the individual. Such changes, for example, may entail the person's age (e.g., when adolescents become adults), status (e.g., when graduate students become professors), or social role (e.g., when singles get married). When such transformations occur, the community may abruptly alter the way that it treats the person. Usually, targets of such differential treatment will eventually become less invested in maintaining their initial identities and become willing to bring their identities into harmony with the treatment they currently receive. Support for such scenarios comes from theories

and research suggesting that late adolescence marks a developmental period during which changing treatment and expectations often prompt significant identity change (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1959; Pals, 1999).

Acquisition/Loss of Abilities

At various times in life people acquire new competencies or lose established ones. Although both gains and losses can occur at any point, gains tend to be concentrated during the early years (e.g., acquiring the ability to play sports, drive a car) and losses tend to be concentrated during the later years (e.g., *losing* the ability to play sports, drive a car). Whether people gain or lose an ability, the experience can have important implications for their identity. One especially powerful influence on people's abilities and related capacities is their physical health. Indeed, because serious illnesses have ramifications for so many aspects of people's lives, the shift from "healthy person" to "patient" may be one of the most psychologically wrenching identity transformations that people undergo. In a related vein, the physical changes that inevitably accompany aging can produce profound identity change even in healthy persons (Whitbourne, 1996).

Strategic Self-Verification

When people realize, either explicitly or implicitly, that their chronic identity could prevent them from achieving a valued goal, they may negotiate a situated identity that promotes the attainment of that goal. Over an extended period of time, such negotiations may produce permanent identity change. Consider, for example, a woman who decides that her negative conception of her attractiveness will prevent her from retaining the affections of her lover. Recognizing the problem, she may strive to be more attractive than usual in the context of her relationship with her lover. If her lover recognizes her heightened attractiveness, she may internalize his positive reactions and come to see herself as more attractive than she did originally (Swann et al., 2002). Notably, research shows that positive feedback from an interaction partner can encourage a person to internalize a new self-view (Jones, Gergen, &

Davis, 1962), thus increasing the likelihood that the negotiator's situated identity will become relatively permanent.

Self-Initiated Changes

On a related note, people may initiate an identity change either to address or repair an unsatisfying life situation or because they aspire to self-improvement. People may, for example, decide that they are dissatisfied with their standard of living and take systematic steps to adopt an identity that will accommodate a more lucrative profession. Some research suggests that such intentional identity change requires a self-focused state of mental preparedness or *subjective readiness to change* (Anthis & LaVoie, 2006). Even those who feel prepared for change, however, will likely find it difficult to alter deeply entrenched aspects of their identity simply because they want to (e.g., Swann, 1999). Indeed, for self-initiated identity change to take root successfully, people should change not only their own self-views and/or narratives, but also other aspects of the identity negotiation process that sustained their former identity, such as specific relationship partners and social contexts.

Gateway Identities

At times, people may engage in behavior but resist internalizing an identity that befits the behavior. For example, in recent years smoking rates stabilized at around 21% of U.S. adults (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005) but the stigma associated with smoking has increased steadily (Kim & Shanahan, 2003). An outgrowth of these trends is that many people take their smoking behavior underground or identify merely as "social smokers," even though they may smoke as energetically and frequently as self-acknowledged smokers. This "pseudo-non-smoker" identity may be a *gateway identity*, a transitional identity that is relatively safe and nonthreatening but that can lull people into behaviors that eventually precipitate full-blown addiction. Once addiction takes hold, it will promote behaviors that produce lasting identity change.

Gateway identities may help people rationalize a wide range of socially questionable behaviors as well. For example, behaviors that range from mistreating a spouse to accepting a bribe and even murder may all be justified by individuals who acknowledge the behavior yet refuse to accept its identity implications. Although the behaviors justified by the gateway identity might be quite different, they all share the common effect of allowing people to cling to their established identities while engaging in behaviors that conflict with that identity. If the behaviors persist, it will become increasingly likely that the individual will be forced to recognize the behavior for what it is and update the identity in question.

In short, although we believe that identities tend to remain fairly stable, there are several mechanisms that can contribute to identity change. If there is a single quality that all of these mechanisms share, it is that they are either triggered by or lead to changes in the social environment. In this respect, identity negotiation theory shares the assumption of both self-categorization theory (e.g., Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) and self-perception theory (Bem, 1972) that stability in people's interpersonal relations fosters stability in identity. Despite this similarity, however, identity negotiation theory does not assume that people's sense of identity is computed on an ad hoc basis from current inputs from the social environment. Identity negotiation theory rejects this "empty self" assumption, arguing instead that people derive a sense of self not only from currently available social inputs but also from chronically activated beliefs about the self that influence, as well as reflect, social inputs. This feature of identity negotiation theory bolsters its ability to explain the stability as well as changeability of self-knowledge.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

"Identity negotiation processes" refer to those activities through which people establish, maintain, and change their identities. This chapter offers a rudimentary theory of identity negotiation. We assume that the identity negotiation process begins when people enter social interactions and strive to establish "who is who." To this end, people

follow (largely without awareness or intention) a host of behavioral principles. Generally, these principles encourage people to negotiate identities that are compatible with their chronic self-views. Under some conditions, however, people may reorganize or transform their identity to accommodate new social realities. As a result, although identity negotiation processes and their accompanying intrapsychic mechanisms usually stabilize identities, they can lead to identity change under specifiable conditions.

To help define identity negotiation, we began by noting the ways in which it is related to, but distinct from, other negotiation processes such as asset negotiations. We then elaborated the interpersonal principles and intrapsychic mechanisms that guide identity negotiation processes, and we explained how these processes unfold during each of several successive stages of social interaction. Although our emphasis was on the ways in which the identity negotiation process can foster stable identities, we pointed to some specific conditions under which identity negotiation processes can lead to identity change.

Identity negotiation processes play a critically important role in peoples' relationships by making them predictable and manageable, which in turn allows people to meet their needs and accomplish their goals. Simply put, just as identities define people and make them viable as human beings, the identity negotiation process defines relationships and makes them viable as a foundation for organized social activity.

As a model that emphasizes the interactive influence of personal and social situational antecedents of behavior, identity negotiation theory joins the relatively recent spate of interactionist theories of personality (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 2003; Cervone, 2004; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Higgins, 1990; Mischel & Shoda, 1999; see Swann & Seyle, 2005, for a discussion). Nevertheless, the theory is unique in its focus on the role of the self, which represents a key component of personality. In addition, by merging two approaches (self-verification theory and symbolic interactionism) that have heretofore received little attention from personality theorists, identity negotiation theory may open up new domains of inquiry regarding the social nature of personality.

NOTE

1. Further distinctions can be made between various subtypes of social self-views. Brewer and Gardner (1996), for example, distinguish relational self-views (e.g., personal qualities associated with role relationships) from collective self-views (e.g., personal qualities associated with group memberships, as "sensitive" is for women). Similarly, Gómez et al. (2007) have documented the impact of group identities (e.g., convictions about the groups with which people are aligned, such as "Spaniards are feisty").

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