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Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity

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This article presents a tripartite model of identity that integrates cognitive, social, and cultural levels of analysis in a multimethod framework. With a focus on content, structure, and process, identity is defined as ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the life course, and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice. This approach to the study of identity challenges personality and social psychologists to consider a cultural psychology framework that focuses on the relationship between master narratives and personal narratives of identity, recognizes the value of a developmental perspective, and uses ethnographic and idiographic methods. Research in personality and social psychology that either explicitly or implicitly relies on the model is reviewed.

Keywords: *narrative; identity; culture; Israeli–Palestinian conflict*

A culturally sensitive psychology . . . is and must be based not only upon what people actually do, but what they say they do and what they say caused them to do what they did.

—Jerome Bruner, 1990, p. 16

In 1948, a nation emerged from the ashes of the Holocaust. The sandy shores, fertile soil, and mountainous beauty of their original homeland once again welcomed them. For the Jews, there was at last a beacon of light at the end of the darkest of nights. This brave group of men and women—survivors of perhaps the single greatest tragedy in human history—took an underdeveloped land to new heights in the 20th century, becoming a model for democracy and economic ascendance in a region known for exotic habits, the ways of an old world, and tired cultural institutions impervious to social and economic evolution.

In 1948, a peaceful people underwent a prolific tragedy with the rupture of their homeland. Having welcomed with open arms the victims of a terrible tragedy in a distant land to a place where people of multiple faiths lived in social harmony, they shared their land, their food, their customs, only to be assaulted in a violent attack on the principles of a pluralistic society. These newcomers, it seemed, were determined to create a nation all for themselves, unwilling to share political authority over a diverse group of individuals and a unique assemblage of cultural identities. Resisting foreign attempts to split their homeland in two, this inherently peaceful people did what they could only think to do: They turned to their neighbors, whose cultures shared a similar language, heritage, and way of life. They, with the help of these neighbors, met the aggressive act of such a political demand with a decidedly aggressive response: the declaration of war. For them, there was no other way to preserve and protect their homeland, united in its historical importance to three religious faiths.

These are the stories of the Israelis and the Palestinians—historical narratives of collective struggle characterized by formidable polarization (Hammack,

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2006) and negative interdependence (Kelman, 1999). They are the stories of threatened identities and of perceptible existential insecurity (Pettigrew, 2003). If the maintenance of antagonism between groups requires the internalization of such narratives (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998; Salomon, 2004; Salomon & Nevo, 2001), what is the process by which the discourse of a culture or nation is reproduced through individual personality and social development?

The purpose of this article is to articulate an integrative perspective on culture and identity for personality and social psychologists interested in processes of social reproduction and social change. More precisely, I argue that a cultural psychology approach that privileges narrative helps to integrate a number of social science perspectives on the relationship between culture and the individual. A focus on individual processes of engagement with the social environment reflects both early traditions in personality and social psychology (e.g., Allport, 1937; Murray, 1938) and more recent efforts to restore an emphasis on idiographic methods (e.g., Gjerde, 2004; Gregg, 2007; Schachter, 2004, 2005). What is particularly unique about the perspective advanced in this article is its attempt to integrate these perspectives, connect them to the historical tradition of personality and social psychology, and suggest a novel theoretical and methodological perspective in the process.

In its integration of cognitive, social, and cultural levels of analysis, the perspective developed in this article conceives of identity in terms of content, structure, and process. Identity is defined as ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the life course and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice. This definition, the components of which will be carefully delineated later in the article, allows for a multilevel analysis of the relationship between culture and identity that is simultaneously social and developmental. An underlying position I assume in this article is that the fragmentation and hyper-specialization that has occurred within psychological science in part obstructs our ability to speak to the “big” questions that contribute to the betterment of society. I argue, therefore, that personality and social psychologists cannot credibly consider identity in nondevelopmental terms, just as developmental psychologists cannot credibly consider identity in acontextual terms. An integrated conception of identity speaks to the utility of a more integrative perspective within psychological science itself.

With some notable exceptions (e.g., Gregg, 2007; McAdams, 2006), personality and social psychologists have tended to view the relationship between culture and personal identity in aggregate terms, seeking to

make broad generalizations about the psychological impact of group membership (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Triandis, 1989). Although this approach is worthwhile for the identification of “patterns” of identity (cf. Benedict, 1934), it has often privileged the general, over the unique, in psychological science (Allport, 1962) by overlooking intragroup heterogeneity. In this article, I argue that a narrative approach to the study of identity and culture restores an earlier commitment in personality and social psychology to the study of individual lives in context (e.g., Murray, 1938). In addition, a narrative approach, by virtue of its theoretical and methodological underpinnings, addresses cultural psychology’s commitment to the discovery and documentation of psychological diversity (Shweder, 1990). Like mainstream personality and social psychology, the emerging cultural psychology paradigm has also tended to privilege the general over the unique (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman et al., 2002; also see Kitayama & Cohen, 2007). As a consequence, variability within, rather than solely between, cultural communities has often been obscured.

Although the fact that Israelis and Palestinians, as distinct national groups, possess contradictory “master narratives” of national identity fits within a categorical-comparative paradigm of culture and identity, what ought also to be of great interest to personality and social psychologists is (a) the individual process of dynamic engagement with stories of collective identity and (b) individual deviations from those master narratives. That is, what ought to interest us beyond the desire to make sweeping claims about “Israeli culture” or “Palestinian culture” and their respective implications for selfhood is the way in which individuals within a given cultural community engage with in-group stories that prime an expectable cognitive, emotional, and social response. The perspective advanced in this article suggests that a narrative approach that utilizes ethnographic methods and assumes an idiographic approach offers a highly illuminating route to this question of cultural engagement.

Why Identity?

A concern with the topic of “identity” has come to dominate a considerable amount of scholarship in both the social sciences and humanities, as well as beyond the academy. Although connected to a particular historical tradition in Western philosophy and intellectual thought (e.g., Hume, 1739/2000; Locke, 1690/1998; also see Baumeister, 1987), the concept of identity possesses remarkable analytic utility for questions of significant concern to social scientists. Three important and interrelated arguments about identity as a construct are developed in this article.

First, the process of identity development represents the link between self and society. This claim is by no means novel. It was prominently advanced by Erik Erikson in a number of his theoretical writings (e.g., Erikson, 1958, 1959, 1963, 1968). It is through the individual identity formation process that the narratives of a given social order, which serve the interests of those in power (cf. Foucault, 1972, 1978; Gramsci, 1971), are either reproduced or repudiated. The interrogation of identity provides direct access to the process of social change.

If identity as a construct links the individual to an ongoing social process, how do social scientists gain access to this process? The second general argument about identity advanced in this article is that the relationship between a “master” narrative and a personal narrative of identity provides direct access to the process of social reproduction and change. The concept of a master narrative (see Bamberg, 2004; Thorne, 2004; Thorne & McLean, 2003) is consistent with notions of a “dominant discourse” that social theorists have long argued is confronted by individuals as they make meaning of their cultural surrounds (e.g., Foucault, 1978). Even as the master narratives of Israeli and Palestinian identity have been contested over the course of their intractable conflict (see Hammack, 2008, in press), young Israelis and Palestinians continue to engage with a basic story that reproduces the conditions of conflict. As individuals begin to construct personal narratives of identity that will anchor the cognitive and social context through which they develop, they engage with master narratives of identity.

The example of Israelis and Palestinians leads to the third argument about identity that is developed in this article. The experience of identity threat, or of existential insecurity in matters of identity, most certainly influences the process of social regeneration (see Giddens, 1991; Kinnvall, 2004; Pettigrew, 2003). Concern over the possible loss of collective identity, which is common among many groups who are marginalized or disempowered within a particular social structure, likely motivates a strong connection between master narratives and personal narratives of identity.

Beyond these three intellectual arguments about identity, I also argue for a particular method for the study of identity that bridges levels of analysis. In fusing the cultural and individual levels of analysis, such an approach to identity fulfills cultural psychology’s commitment to querying the process of person–culture coconstitution (see Shweder, 1990, 2003). That is, the approach promulgated in this article calls for a concern with both cultural and individual analysis. Methods that allow for cultural analysis, such as ethnography, must be fused with those that address individual experience, such as interview and survey methods (see Jessor,

Colby, & Shweder, 1996). A cultural psychology that becomes increasingly idiographic is necessary to address the important theoretical questions about identity that consume our current social concerns (see Gjerde, 2004).

Although the central aim of this article is to offer a novel, integrative theoretical framework for the study of identity in psychology, my underlying agenda is also to elevate the impact contemporary psychologists can have in the scholarly and popular discourse on identity. It is noteworthy that in a 2006 issue of *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, devoted to identity, of the nine scholars invited to contribute, five were philosophers, and the remaining scholars were historians, political scientists, or scholars in religious studies (e.g., Appiah, 2006; Bilgrami, 2006; Doniger, 2006; Hacking, 2006). The one representative of “psychology” was a neurologist (Feinberg, 2006). This emphasis on psychology’s contribution as exclusively biological suggests that many in the academy perhaps fail to acknowledge the vitality of contemporary work in personality and social psychology on identity. The fact that the voice of social, personality, and developmental psychology was entirely absent from this intellectual conversation is disappointing but not surprising given the absence of such voices in larger conversations on identity in the academy (see Moshman, 2007). The paradigm of identity developed in this article is meant to increase the ability of psychologists to contribute to these conversations by sensitizing us better to the role of culture—beyond the traditional categorical and dichotomous conceptualizations we have often embraced in the past.

To fully develop this theoretical and methodological perspective on the cultural psychology of identity, I begin by contextualizing the problem of identity in terms of both (a) its contemporary relevance in a globalized world and (b) its genesis in 20th century American psychology and sociology. Because the paradigm of cultural psychology is central to the theoretical framework of identity I propose, the third section of the article explicitly focuses on work that has sought to link culture and identity. Finally, a theoretical perspective that integrates levels of analysis to maximize the contextual specificity and cross-disciplinary relevance of identity is proposed, accompanied by a review of recent research that either explicitly or implicitly adopts the model.

Five specific lines of research that clearly illustrate the link between master narratives and personal narratives of identity are reviewed to illustrate the proposed integrative framework. Work that assumes both a micro-social (e.g., Bamberg, 2004) and macro-social (e.g., McAdams, 2006) approach to the examination of master narratives and personal narratives is reviewed, as is research that focuses on narrative identity construction in the context of identity threat (e.g., Gregg,

2007; Hammack, 2006) and social change (e.g., Cohler, 2007). These particular research programs suggest the vitality of a new paradigm for the study of identity and culture that integrates levels of analysis as it makes use of novel methodological approaches.

The Problem of Identity in a Globalized World

The contrast between Israeli and Palestinian collective narratives that introduced this article speaks to the relevance of identity in a global context of increasing interconnectedness among cultural groups (see Arnett, 2002). Without question the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is more connected to the unresolved status of national fulfillment, which is a hallmark of the modern era and the age of nationalism (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990), than to the “postmodern” context of globalization and multiculturalism (see Bekerman & Maoz, 2005). Yet intractable conflict shares an important psychosocial feature with the broader context of an increasingly globalized, multicultural, interconnected world: the experience of identity insecurity (Giddens, 1991; Kinnvall, 2004; Pettigrew, 2003).

The contemporary relevance of identity is most connected to the challenges to personal and social meaning activated by the forces of history. We may characterize these challenges as part of a “transition” from a modern to postmodern era in which technological advancement has altered the nature of the economy and with that the meaning of community and individuality (Sampson, 1989; also see Gergen, 1991, 2001; cf. Smith, 1994). Technological innovations such as the automobile, the airplane, and the personal computer (linked via the Internet) have increased the interconnectedness of groups, even as they have contributed to the erosion of traditional community life. The importance of proximal, local sites of social influence wanes with access to a global community (Arnett, 2002). In the economic context of globalization, individuals can no longer look to their local communities for assurance of security because local economies are linked to one another in the larger global economy. With exposure to globalization comes the greater possibility of identity conflicts both between and within individuals as they negotiate local and global sources of social influence and indices of meaning (Arnett, 2002; Kinnvall, 2004).

The general pattern of interpopulation convergence, driven by immigration and the subsequent development of multicultural societies (see Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006), creates unique identity challenges for the state and its institutions, centering on issues of accommodation, integration, and citizenship (e.g., Fukuda-Parr,

2004; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Moghaddam, 2007; Taylor, 1994; United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2004; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). Technological and economic shifts also beget fundamental alterations to the life course itself, the best example of which is the proliferation of a new period of “emerging adulthood” in many postindustrial nations (Arnett, 2000, 2004). Similar to prior notions of a “psychosocial moratorium” (Erikson, 1959, 1968) and of a period of “youth” (Keniston, 1971, 1972), Arnett argued that the economic context of postindustrialization mandates an extended period of identity exploration prior to the assumption of adult roles.

The problem of identity, though, is not simply a matter of life-course timing. It is, rather, the substance of identity and its place in the larger process of cultural reproduction that are central to an integrative formulation. In this article, I argue that identity as a universal process of individual human development, the content of which is necessarily culturally and historically contingent, allows us to query larger processes of social reproduction by identifying the meaning with which individuals internalize collective narratives. Such an approach is particularly needed in light of the disparate ways in which the concept of identity has been employed to illuminate the relationship between self and society. An integrative model of culture and identity enhances the coherence with which psychologists contribute to the discourse on human development in an increasingly globalized world.

Beyond the structural changes that affect the timing and substance of personal identity development, the problem of identity is deeply connected to a changing discourse on personhood and on the sustenance of “primordial” constructions of identity that the modern era required for successful nation-building (see Anderson, 1983; Geertz, 1971; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Suny, 2001). As the coherence of collective identities—often rooted in primordial notions of historical contiguity—has been increasingly destabilized, individuals who perceive the existential uncertainty of identity destabilization have turned to insular systems of social meaning, such as religious extremism, for personal coherence (Kinnvall, 2004).

If the historical context of late modernity is one of contested collective meaning, it makes sense that individuals may be motivated to adopt an identity that preserves a sense of ontological security and minimizes existential anxiety (Giddens, 1991; Kinnvall, 2004). The ways in which states have “managed” identity and cultural diversity in policy have generally contributed to the insecurity of groups (Fukuda-Parr, 2004; UNDP, 2004), often by promoting “singular” visions of identity and denying the multiple identities that individuals possess (Sen, 2006). At a time in which threats to security are often framed

in terms of identity (e.g., the individual “terrorist”; see Moghaddam, 2004), the empirical study of identity formation calls us to consider the rich complexity of individual lives and to refocus the dichotomous lens through which we are often encouraged to view human diversity (e.g., Huntington, 1996; Lewis, 2002).

Thus, the problem of identity is deeply connected to questions of personal and social meaning. If globalization and the increasing connectedness of groups call into question indigenous axes of meaning, as realized through the identification with local narratives of collective history and identity, then it is through the cultural psychology of identity that we may derive insights into the specificity of contemporary human development. In its functional property as the link between person and culture, identity transcends disciplines and offers a powerful theoretical lens for the study of human development in cultural context.

The Story of Identity in the Social Sciences

To fully contextualize the proposed model of identity, it is useful to briefly consider the history of identity as a construct of investigation in the social sciences. The story of identity is linked to larger concerns with individualism and concepts of a unified, independent self that can be traced to the early modern period and the narrative of the Enlightenment (Baumeister, 1987; also see Markus & Kitayama, 1994).

The story of identity in American psychology is generally considered to have begun with the work of William James. In his two-volume magnum opus, *James* (1890) defined the sense of personal identity as the “consciousness of personal sameness” (p. 331), privileging individual cognition in the development of identity. In sociology, the Chicago School of symbolic interactionism contributed most to conceptions of identity. Cooley (1902) famously proposed the concept of a “looking glass self” in which selfhood is constructed through the reflections we receive in social interaction. Building on the work of Cooley and Baldwin (1897), George Herbert Mead (1934) developed a theory of self-development that primarily relied on the process of social interaction for its substantive form.

Sociologists in the symbolic interactionist tradition continued to elaborate on this perspective throughout the 20th century (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1959, 1963, 1967; McCall & Simmons, 1966; A. L. Strauss, 1959/1997; Stryker, 1987; for a comprehensive review, see Dunn, 1997). The emphasis on identity as a product of social interaction—as mutually constructed in an ongoing “conversation of gestures” (Mead, 1934)—represents a vital contribution of this line of scholarship. Goffman’s (1959) seminal extension of this work

in his dramaturgical theory of self highlighted the performative aspects of selfhood.

No scholar came to emphasize the concept and term *identity* as significantly as did Erikson, who popularized the notion of an “identity crisis” in youth at a time when youth rebellion in American culture was rapidly becoming a foregone conclusion. Erikson (1959, 1968) viewed identity formation as “an evolving configuration” involving internal synthesis and integration of biological, social, and psychological forces within an individual. Infusing psychoanalytic concepts such as identification (e.g., Freud, 1921/1959) with cultural and historical sensibility, Erikson constructed a theory of development across the life cycle that would inspire a generation of discourse—scholarly and otherwise—on the “tasks” and “crises” of development.

Erikson, like many of his contemporaries in early developmental psychology (e.g., Piaget & Inhelder, 1966), sought to articulate a universal hierarchical framework of development that could account for human change over time. It is particularly the aspiration for a universal, stage-based model of development that lacks resonance in the context of a new discourse on human development that privileges the long-neglected role of culture (e.g., Cole, 1996; Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990) and the ways in which lives are not always lived in perfect linearity (Shanahan, 2000). In their faith in the Platonic notion of “psychic unity” (Shweder, 1990), early stage-based models of human development tended to privilege psychological universalism in their promulgation of prototypical sequences. Unlike many early social psychologists (e.g., Allport, 1954; Lewin, 1946), their attention to the social environment tended to assume a more micro-contextual perspective. In many ways, Erikson was an exception in this respect. Although he did indeed posit a stage-based model of development, intended to augment Freud’s stage-based model of psychosexual development, Erikson took quite seriously the significance of history and culture in the development of the individual (e.g., Erikson, 1958).

Erikson’s theory perhaps suffers from the kind of search for a universal developmental sequence that was common to a particular era in psychological theorizing—a “modern” era in which faith in science and the notion of genuine human progress had not been eroded by a late modern sensibility (Gergen, 2001). Yet what is remarkable about his theory is that, owing to its interdisciplinarity and its broad conceptualization of identity, its relevance persists as a general framework for understanding human development. It is perhaps also that the problem of identity he so eloquently introduced returns to our concerns now precisely because the social and cultural concerns that caused Erikson to prioritize identity have only magnified.

In outlining the components of identity, Erikson (1959) argued that identity refers to “a conscious *sense of individual identity*” as well as “a maintenance of an inner *solidarity* with a group’s ideals and identity” (p. 109). To understand the full embellishment of an identity, beyond what Erikson would term its “ego” functions but what we might prefer to dub its purely “cognitive” features, we must theorize the formation of social identity—that part of identity that, as Erikson argued, contains an awareness of an individual’s location within the solidarity of a particular group (cf. Tajfel, 1978b). It is to this integrative task—to a fusion of cognitive and social perspectives on individual development that cultural psychology necessarily addresses—that the proposed model turns in concrete terms.

The Psychological Study of Identity Since Erikson

In psychology, the field of identity studies continues to thrive. Although Erikson’s writings certainly created the impetus for an identity discourse in psychology, it was James Marcia’s (1966) adaptation of Erikson’s theory that proved to set the intellectual agenda for identity research for decades over and above Erikson (for reviews, see Côté & Levine, 2002; Schwartz, 2001). Marcia’s framework was more epistemologically and methodologically amenable to American psychology’s penchant for clearly operationalized, empirically “sound” constructs. His categorization of identity “status” provided a language that would come to dominate the field of identity studies within psychology.

Marcia’s (1966) adaptation of Eriksonian theory focused on the ideas of exploration and commitment in matters of beliefs, goals, and values. By rating participants on dimensions of exploration and commitment, Marcia proposed four independent identity statuses to describe the state of identity development at the time of assessment. Individuals high in both exploration and commitment are said to be in a state of identity achievement; they have openly explored the ideological and occupational possibilities available to them and have made a commitment. Individuals high in exploration but low in commitment are said to be in a state of moratorium; their identities are in the midst of development but do not yet possess coherence. Individuals low in exploration but high in commitment are said to be in a state of foreclosure; these individuals have made ideological and occupational commitments in the absence of independent consideration. The status of foreclosure reveals Marcia’s developmental approach: The commitments of the individual in foreclosure status represent a continued reliance on childhood identifications. Lacking the will to explore other ideological options, the foreclosed individual has

essentially internalized the expectations of family or community. Finally, individuals low in both exploration and commitment are said to be in a state of identity diffusion; they are generally apathetic toward goals, values, and ideologies and demonstrate little interest in such matters.

As Schwartz (2001) noted, most critics of the identity status paradigm argue that it is more useful in efforts at character typology than elaboration of developmental process (e.g., Côté & Levine, 1988). Much of the empirical work associated with the paradigm, following Marcia’s early descriptive work, has been correlational in nature. As expected, classification in a particular status is associated with a host of personality variables (Marcia, 1980, 1993). For example, identity achievement is associated with more effective decision-making skills and more depth in interpersonal relationships (Marcia, 1993; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). By contrast, individuals in the foreclosure status are more likely to display rigidity and close-mindedness (Marcia, 1980), authoritarianism (Marcia, 1967), and idealized relationships with their parents (Adams, Dyk, & Bennion, 1987).

Since Erikson’s original formulation and Marcia’s (1966, 1980) adaptation, the literature on identity within psychology has been prolific, with theoretical and empirical accounts of identity process (e.g., Grotevant, 1987), identity style (e.g., Berzonsky, 1989), identity capital (e.g., Côté, 1996; Côté & Levine, 2002), identity configuration (Schachter, 2004, 2005), and other neo-Eriksonian formulations (e.g., Côté, 1993; Waterman, 1984; for a comprehensive review, see Schwartz, 2001). Though most of these formulations are culturally and historically bound in their emphasis on Western notions of personhood, there is an increasing emphasis on the cultural variability of identity (e.g., Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Phinney, 1990, 1996; Schachter, 2005).

Many of these paradigmatic accounts of identity, including Erikson’s original, offer a host of useful vocabularies for a cultural psychology of identity. Concepts such as “foreclosure” (e.g., Marcia, 1966) may speak to the response of individuals to a group’s sense of identity threat or existential insecurity. Are Palestinian and Israeli youth, for example, more likely to construct personal narratives that closely conform to the master narrative of in-group identity, thus displaying a kind of “foreclosure” activated by the context of existential insecurity for the collective? Perspectives such as that of Baumeister and Muraven (1996), who argued that identity is best understood as adaptation to a particular developmental context, refreshingly restore a concept of history and culture to contemporary identity discourse in psychology. In formulating identity as adaptation, they seek to retain a notion of agency while recognizing the salience of context (cf. Côté & Levine, 2002; Levine, 2005). Thus, the tendency of Israeli and

Palestinian youth to appear in a state of identity “foreclosure” may, in fact, represent an important adaptation to their social ecology of development, and research has suggested a psychological benefit to ideological commitment for youth in situations of political violence (e.g., Barber, 2001; Punamäki, 1996).

The “developmental social psychology” perspective posited by Adams and Marshall (1996) is also particularly useful in the primacy it affords context in the process of identity development. Identity, they argued, embodies both an individual and a social function, with underlying processes of differentiation (e.g., the development of autonomy and uniqueness) and integration (e.g., the involvement and connection with others; cf. Brewer, 1991). The balance between these basic self-processes will necessarily vary across contexts of development—a point that speaks to identity’s intrinsic cultural variability as a process of human development. The balance between differentiation and integration may vary according to the perceived existential security of the group. That is, integration may be more important for individuals from groups that experience identity insecurity, such as Israelis and Palestinians (Barber, 2001).

A third and most recent sophisticated conception of identity is Schachter’s (2004, 2005) notion of identity configuration. Building off of Erikson’s original theory, Schachter (2005) posited that identity configurations represent the ways in which structurally individuals piece together the multiple elements of their identities into a meaningful whole. For example, Schachter’s (2005) case study of a Jewish Orthodox man reveals the way in which he integrates religious devotion and a professional interest in science in a way that does not threaten his sense of personal identity, even as the conflict between science and religion disrupts his worldview. Through his personal narrative, this man is able to construct what Schachter called a “configuration” of identity that continues to provide meaning. This configuration is structured with flexibility and thus represents an “adaptation” to the social and historical context of his life (cf. Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). The concept of configuration, Schachter argued, is particularly useful for its ability to contribute to a contextually based cultural psychology and to bridge historical discourses of identity itself (i.e., premodern, modern, and postmodern).

Most research in the Eriksonian tradition has been located within the subdiscipline of developmental psychology. The study of identity within social psychology has taken a different intellectual path, primarily inspired by Henri Tajfel and his associates who developed social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978a, 1981, 1982a, 1982b; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As a response to the American view of intergroup relations, which emphasized either individual personality variables (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik,

Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Allport, 1954) or conflicts of material interest and competition for resources (e.g., Sherif, 1958), Tajfel and his colleagues sought to create a distinctly European social psychology that would recognize the primacy of mere group affiliation—or social categorization (Tajfel, 1978b)—as determinative of intergroup conflict (see Moghaddam, 1987). The famous series of experiments using the “minimal-group paradigm” revealed that the identification with a group, no matter how minimal or trivial the basis for categorization, was sufficient to activate intergroup conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), suggesting that social identity is a key (if not *the* key) mechanism in the psychology of intergroup relations.

Social psychologists who study intergroup relations, and intergroup conflict and cooperation in particular, have increasingly embraced a social identity paradigmatic perspective (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Ashmore, Jussim, & Wilder, 2001; Brewer, 1991, 1996, 2001; Greene, 1999; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Huddy, 2001; Hurtado, Gurin, & Peng, 1994; Irwing & Stringer, 2000; Nesdale & Flesser, 2001; Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Frederico, 1999; Suleiman, 2004). In identifying the powerful role of social categorization in cognition and behavior, social identity theory has successfully countered the reliance on decontextualized individual cognition on which many historic approaches to identity primarily have relied. Yet the foundation of social psychological theories of intergroup relations in a European androcentric framework has obscured the salient role of culture in studies of identity, focusing instead either on an individual, independent theory of the person (in the American case) or on a collective, passive theory of the person (in the European case). The cultural grounding of these perspectives in the United States and Europe—and the universalizing knowledge claims that emerge from them—obscures the reality of multiculturalism in the world and, with it, the possibility of indigenous axes of meaning around the idea of identity (see Moghaddam, 1987). With this metatheoretical dilemma in mind, we now turn to a consideration of identity in cultural psychology—a paradigm that explicitly recognizes the possibility of multiplicity in social categories of meaning (Bruner, 1990; Shweder, 1990).

Identity and Cultural Psychology

The integrative model proposed in this article is intended to foster collaborative interdisciplinary work on identity through the paradigmatic lens of cultural psychology. By its inherent epistemological and metatheoretical perspective, cultural psychology represents a “moderate” intellectual perspective between the poles of

positivism, in which the quest for universals of human development continues in mainstream American psychology (see Gergen, 2001), and social constructionism, in which the faith in knowledge obtained through scientific inquiry is challenged by skepticism in the knowable world (Shweder, 1990, 2003). Cultural psychology rejects this epistemological binary by arguing for “universalism without uniformity” (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). Paradigmatically, cultural psychology is quintessentially integrative, as it seeks to fuse individual and cultural levels of analysis (e.g., Moghaddam, 2002).

Cultural psychology acknowledges the possibility of universal processes in human development, but its proponents argue that the content of these processes necessarily varies. Research in cultural psychology seeks to contribute to an elaboration of this variability—of this diversity in the subjective experience of human development. In this way, cultural psychology is to be distinguished from traditional work in “cross-cultural” psychology, which has generally sought to identify universals of human development through the adoption of Western, rather than indigenous, psychological constructs (see Shweder, 1990; also see Greenfield, 2000). Traditionally, cross-cultural psychology has been interested in the study of psychological similarity, often through the cross-cultural study of instrumentation or construct validity. By contrast, cultural psychologists pursue research questions that expose indigenous psychological constructs or the experiential variability of human development (for review, see Miller, 1994).

Tracing its intellectual origins as far back as Wundt's (1916) notion of folk psychology, cultural psychology is most concerned with the specificity of cultural meaning (e.g., Bruner, 1990; D'Andrade, 1984; Shore, 1996; Shweder, 1990; C. Strauss & Quinn, 1997). As such, its intellectual architects and proponents have studied topics such as the relationship between culture and cognition (e.g., Cole, 1996; Cole & Scribner, 1974; D'Andrade, 1981; Nisbett, 2003; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995; Shore, 1991; Wierzbicka, 1992), the relationship between culture and emotion (e.g., Kitayama & Markus, 1997; Menon & Shweder, 1997; Shweder, 1985, 1994; Shweder & Haidt, 2000), culturally and semiotically mediated activity (e.g., Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002; Valsiner, 2001, 2002), and the cultural meaning of morality, values, and practices (e.g., Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Shweder, 2002; Shweder, Balle-Jensen, & Goldstein, 1995; Shweder & Much, 1987; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). The cultural specificity of identity and selfhood has, in fact, been central to theory and research in cultural psychology.

In an influential comparative study, Shweder and Bourne (1984) examined divergent conceptions of selfhood in Indian and American societies through an

analysis of personal descriptions of a close acquaintance. Compared to participants in the United States, participants in India were more likely to qualify their descriptions with contextual references and references to behavioral instances. The authors posited that the sociocentric nature of Indian culture, in contrast to the egocentric character of American culture, helps to explain such divergences in descriptions of others.

This general lexicon for interpreting diversity in conceptions of self and identity has continued to dominate the work of cultural psychologists. Triandis (1989) spoke of high-contrast dichotomies between cultures when he referred to individualism and collectivism (for a review and theoretical extensions, see Brewer & Chen, 2007; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Oyserman, 1993; Oyserman et al., 2002). Similarly, the framework of Markus and Kitayama (1991), who based their perspective primarily on the cultural contrast between the United States and Japan, focuses on independence versus interdependence in constructions of selfhood. In cultures that rely on an “interdependent” self-construal, the relatedness and communion among individuals is a key social value. As such, identity becomes a relational matter in which one's social location in a community supercedes a focus on individual uniqueness in identity. Cultures in which an “independent” self-construal underlies the discourse on identity, such as the United States, emphasize the individual's sense of distinction within a community. What is valued is a unique identity that contributes to community life, but always in a distinguishable way.

Although these broad contrasts may offer a useful heuristic for understanding cultural variability in concepts of self and identity, they tend to reify the groups under study and ascribe a kind of statisticity to their psychological phenomenology. Gjerde (2004) argued that these kinds of dichotomous theories of culture and self are highly suspect and rely on an antiquated notion of culture as a homogenizing force. Consistent with perspectives in cultural anthropology (e.g., Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990), Gjerde viewed the concept of culture itself as contested and analytically unstable (also see Baumrind, 1998; cf. Shweder, 2003). Traditional perspectives on the cultural psychology of self have, in their penchant for tidy binaries, contributed to an exaggeration of both intercultural divergence and intracultural homogeneity, particularly in their “East” versus “West” conceptualizations (cf. Said, 1978/1994a; Sen, 2006; also see Spiro, 1993).

Gjerde (2004) encouraged a reformulation of the relation between culture and person that, consistent with idiographic and personological perspectives in psychology (e.g., Cohler, 2007; Gregg, 2005, 2007; Hammack, 2006; Josselson, 1996; McAdams, 1995, 2006; Mishler, 1996, 1999; Schachter, 2005) and person-centered approaches in psychological anthropology (e.g., Linger,

2005), assumes a “bottom-up” approach through the intensive study of individual experience in cultural context. In addition, Gjerde argued for a consideration of culture that addresses issues of power and identity, thereby expanding the cultural psychology of identity to include the structural realities in which selves develop. By critically interrogating the use of the concept of culture within psychology, Gjerde helped to enhance the sophistication of a cultural psychology of identity by moving it beyond a categorical-comparative paradigm (also see Gjerde & Onishi, 2000).

One of the primary deficits of the original perspective on the cultural psychology of identity may have been to theorize too broadly. Perhaps making hasty contrasts between cultures in the large-scale aggregate, as the “culture and personality” school of psychological anthropology had done with its studies of “national character” in the 20th century (e.g., Benedict, 1934; Linton, 1945), this preliminary work on the cultural psychology of identity tended to present binaries of identity that overlooked heterogeneity within cultural groups. Thus, broad notions of “collectivist” versus “individualist” cultures (e.g., Triandis, 1989), or “independent” versus “interdependent” self-construals (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991), although possessing a kind of patterned sensibility, have contributed less than possible to our understanding of the complex depth of the individual experience of identity development in cultural context. Yet these formulations must be appreciated for their role in directing mainstream American psychology’s analytic gaze more thoroughly toward culture and the diversity of human psychological experience across cultural contexts.

A theoretical framework of culture and identity that recognizes the prodigious diversity of thought, feeling, and behavior that often occurs within cultural groups offers a novel approach to the cultural psychology of identity. Research that can illuminate the meaning that individuals ascribe to their place in a social and historical matrix of ideological possibilities speaks to a more idiographic concern, but it does not negate the value of nomothetic generalizability. In fact, such an approach seeks to restore the centrality of the individual participant to psychology, long abandoned by a positivist-infused epistemological culture that focuses on prediction and control (e.g., Kvale, 1992). With the increasing recognition of social and historical contingency in human development (e.g., Elder, 1974, 1998; Hammack, 2005b) comes a greater appreciation for approaches that abandon such blind positivism for a perspective that can illuminate the individual quest for personal coherence in the face of social change (also see Smith, 1978, 1994).

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN CULTURAL CONTEXT: AN INTEGRATED MODEL

The task of theoretical integration on identity necessarily involves the consideration of cognitive, social, and cultural levels of analysis. To reiterate, the tripartite model proposed here conceives of identity in terms of content, structure, and process. Identity is defined as ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the life course and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice. In this way, the content of identity is inherently ideological, assuming a narrative structure and realized in and through social experience. Each component of this integrated definition of identity is delineated in the remainder of this article.

This perspective on identity fuses a number of approaches across the social sciences, including formulations within anthropology (e.g., Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), psychology (e.g., McAdams, 1996; McAdams & Pals, 2006), and discourse studies (van Dijk, 1998). In connecting these formulations to classic perspectives on self and identity in the social sciences (e.g., Erikson, 1958, 1959; Foucault, 1972; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978) through the paradigmatic lens of cultural psychology, I argue for both the historical continuity of a scientific concept of identity and the necessity of an interdisciplinary model to provide coherence to its evolving social utility as a construct for empirical investigation.

The Ideological Content of Identity

In spite of postwar perspectives on the “end of ideology,” the endurance of political conflict and polarization along ideological grounds suggests that ideology possesses continued relevance to psychologists (Jost, 2006). The master narratives of Palestinian and Israeli identity clearly possess ideological foundations that contribute to the intractability of their conflict. The concept of ideology is not identical to the concept of a master narrative, for a master narrative assumes the form of a story. But ideology is an important part of this story, concerned with its distinctly cognitive components, including a particular evaluative and attitudinal perspective. To the extent that life narratives are always constructed in some sociopolitical context of power relations and inequities among groups, they are inherently ideological (Gregg, 1991).

The concept of ideology is considered, along with terms such as *society*, to be among the most diffuse and confused within the social science lexicon (van Dijk,

1998; for review, see Eagleton, 1991). Yet *ideology* exists in popular and scholarly discourse, with its particular pejorative connotation, as a term with a sense of comprehensibility, particularly when paired with the concept of identity. It is *ideology* that has, over the course of human history, been used to control a polity (Marx, 1932/1978); it is *ideology* that lodges itself within the minds of unthinking subjects and motivates the assumption of a *collective mind* (Le Bon, 1895/1969). It is through the manipulation of ideas that a state comes to control its subjects through its institutional *apparatus* (Althusser, 1971). Such has been the discursive history of ideology within the social sciences, generally having succeeded in infusing the popular discourse on ideology in most Western societies.

Though I recognize the legitimate basis of a pejorative account of ideology when assuming a critical historical perspective, I suggest that the concept of ideology is more theoretically useful in the case of identity when we imbue it with a more “neutral” operational character. In fact, psychologists who have tended to use the concept of ideology have done so in a more general way to refer to the abstract system of beliefs that develops within an individual, through a discursive engagement within a particular cultural context (e.g., McAdams, 1990, 1996).

An emphasis on the relationship between identity and ideology in psychology can be traced to Erikson. In *Young Man Luther*, Erikson’s (1958) analysis of young Luther’s life revealed identity as primarily connected to processes of ideological identification that are themselves connected to the intergenerational transmission and social reproduction of a culture. It is precisely because young Luther, as part of his own identity crisis, rejected the ideology of a day that a new history of European culture was written. Thus, Erikson’s analysis connected processes of individual identity formation—in the form of ideological identification—to larger sociohistorical movements. Luther’s ideological rebellion is tied to his struggle to form an identity that would fulfill the basic function of psychological security.

Erikson (1968) viewed ideology very broadly as “a system of ideas that provides a convincing world image” (p. 31). Ideology, in his formulation, is “the social institution which is the guardian of identity” (Erikson, 1968, p. 133). In his life-story theory of identity, McAdams (1990, 1996, 2001) also preferred a broad conceptualization of ideology as an abstract system of social and political beliefs. This general view of ideology seems quite appropriate when considering the connection between ideology and identity, as other conceptions have tended toward a de-emphasis of individual agency when considering ideology (e.g., Althusser, 1971; Marx, 1932/1978; cf. Mannheim, 1936).

Psychological research on personal ideology remains fertile ground for empirical work. de St. Aubin (1996) examined the life stories and survey responses of 64 adults, focusing on polarity in personal ideology and its relationship to variables such as values, beliefs about human nature, beliefs about religion and politics, and the nature of remembered life events. The results of this study suggest that an individual’s personal ideology is associated with all of these variables and that individuals can be clearly distinguished based on the personal ideology they have come to adopt in life. In addition, personal ideology possesses clear emotional correlates: Individuals who scored high in “normative” ideology (i.e., conformity or norm adherence) tended to relate memories infused with more anger. The implications of this study are that the concept of personal ideology is central to the formation of identity, as ideology offers value-laden content to the life story that is associated with religious and political identification.

A study by McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, and Mansfield (1997) of the life stories of generative and non-generative adults suggests that generativity is associated with the ability to offer a concise personal ideology. Highly generative adults were more likely than adults lower in generativity to describe a coherent and stable personal ideology over time, revealing the significance of ideological commitment in the identity formation process.

Although psychological research on ideology extensively focuses on the role that ideological identification seems to serve in a number of contexts (e.g., Punamäki, 1996; Schechner, Slone, & Bialik, 2007), less attention has been devoted to the role of ideology in identity development. The ideological content of identity is best understood for its functional nature in the provision of social meaning. The interdisciplinary perspective of van Dijk (1998) speaks to the integrative role of ideology in the psychological functioning of individuals. In this perspective, ideology is viewed as “the interface between social structure and social cognition” (p. 8). Ideological identification allows individuals to organize and synthesize the shared representations of a group, a culture, or a nation, in such a way as to construct a sense of person-culture symbiosis. Ideology is hence inherently cognitive in that it involves an internalization of shared representations, be they in the form of abstract beliefs or historical narratives that are imbued with imagery. The internalization of an ideological system and its supporting narrative thus serves both an individual and a cultural function: It creates coherence within an individual and his or her cultural location while simultaneously reproducing a given social order with its collective narrative.

van Dijk’s (1998) interdisciplinary approach to ideology thus bridges individual and societal levels of

analysis. Although it recognizes the cultural function of ideology and the way in which ideological identification is inherently connected to social processes of discursive engagement, its emphasis on individual cognition speaks to the individual mechanism of social reproduction. Yet the ideological content of identity primarily speaks to its cognitive basis and is incomplete without a consideration of the mechanism by which the identification with ideology develops. It is to a full consideration of narrative that we must turn to properly theorize the structure that identity assumes.

Identity as Personal Narrative

If the content of identity assumes an ideological quality—a cognition of self in relation to discourse—it is through the development of a personal narrative that such cognition is rendered comprehensible and meaningful to an individual and to the group or groups to which he or she belongs. If ideology provides the basic cognitive content of identity, it is in narrative that ideological identifications assume a coherent structure. The paradigm proposed here accords primacy to the concept of narrative, thereby a part of the larger intellectual project associated with narrative identity (e.g., Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Bruner, 1990, 2002; Cohler, 1982; Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 1983; Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; McAdams, 1990, 1996, 2006; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006; Mishler, 1999; Somers, 1994).

The narrative approach to identity focuses on the mechanism by which processes of psychosocial synthesis and person–culture integration occur across the life course. In the narrative approach, human development is characterized by the construction of a personal narrative across the life course that provides meaning and integrative function to the individual (Cohler, 1982). It is through the construction of personal narrative that the life course achieves its coherence, its continuity in social, cultural, and historical time (Cohler, 1982). To fully know a person, we must know more than just his or her “traits” or “personal concerns”; we must know his or her identity (McAdams, 1995). And we come to know identity only through encountering the life-story narrative that he or she has constructed (McAdams, 1995). In this way, identity—understood as a life story—represents the “third level” of personality beyond traits and personal concerns (McAdams, 1995, 1996, 2001; McAdams & Pals, 2006).

In personality, social, and developmental psychology, this “third level” is increasingly being investigated, as the concept of narrative becomes theoretically central to a number of scholars (for review, see Thorne, 2004; Thorne & Nam, in press). Recent work in personality

and social psychology has revealed that stories are central to creating meaning of life experience (e.g., McLean, 2005; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; McLean & Pratt, 2006; Pasupathi, Mansour, & Brubaker, 2007). The psychological process of story making, or narrative construction, is related to intimacy, well-being, and ego development (e.g., King & Hicks, 2006; King & Noelle, 2005), personality traits (e.g., Thorne, Korobov, & Morgan, 2007), and personality and life-course development in general (e.g., Pals, 2006; Pratt & Fiese, 2004; Thorne, 2000). This recent work in personality and social psychology affirms the notion that it is through narrative that we come to understand the meaning that a life possesses, both for an individual and in his or her relation to some particular social and cultural ecology (see Thorne & Nam, 2007).

In personality and social psychology and beyond, narrative is increasingly recognized as the gateway to meaning in understanding socially situated individual lives (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Thorne, 2004). An emphasis on meaning making helps to “humanize” psychological science, for in the examination of meaning we come to a representation of lived experience (cf. Smith, 1986, 1990). A focus on narrative also speaks to the larger cultural context of contemporary identity development by suggesting unity and purpose to the life course, even in the wake of radical multiplicity (McAdams, 1997; cf. Gergen, 1991; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Lifton, 1993).

The concept of identity as narrative provides a much-needed anchor for conceptualizing the self in postmodernity, not for its sometimes seeming regression to a modernist standard of epistemological certainty (as if to reify the notion of self) but for its ability to endure in spite of the multiplicity or “multiphrenia” (Gergen, 1991) that characterizes postmodernity (McAdams, 1997; also see Smith, 1994). This reliance on narrative as a way of meaning making for individual identity may also be tied to the postwar conception of an “empty self” (Cushman, 1990). As Cushman (1990) argued, contemporary notions of selfhood rely on an “empty self” that must be “filled up”—a conception that serves economic and political interests as much as individual psychological interests. The emphasis on narrative identity and the life story as a product can be linked to his historical analysis.

Conceptualizing identity as narrative may be especially useful in the context of competing discourses created by a globalized, postmodern world because identity becomes increasingly a reflexive project (Giddens, 1991). That is, exposure to a proliferation of discourses creates new narrative demands on the individual, for the quantity and complexity of incoming information if nothing else. No longer can identity proceed along the

clearest of lines between generations, for it is no longer a single “local” discourse to which an individual is exposed (Arnett, 2002). Rather, local and global discourses compete for primacy in the identity formation process of an individual. In this historical context, the construction of a narrative of identity becomes more explicit, more vital to the individual’s quest for meaning and ideological location than (perhaps) ever before (Giddens, 1991).

A narrative perspective on identity is thus descriptive of a certain historical reality that globalization, with its transmission of new and sometimes contradictory discourses, secures for the development of an individual. It should be clear that problematizing identity as narrative elucidates its quality as a superordinate construct of human development and consciousness. The personal narrative provides meaning and purpose by creating continuity in time for the individual; life experience is given temporal structure with a beginning, middle, and end through the construction of the life story (McAdams, 1996, 1997). But perhaps even more significantly, in linking identity and narrative in an individual, we link an individual life story to a particular cultural and historical narrative of a group, such as the stories of Israelis and Palestinians that introduced this article. That is, if identity takes its form as a life story, with particular ideological content, then it stands to reason that an individual identity is given meaning and coherence only in its engagement with a discourse available in a particular social ecology (see Thorne & Nam, 2007).

The stories of a culture—stories of national identity, struggle, suffering, and resilience—become the stories of an individual as he or she constructs his or her own personal narrative, fusing elements of daily experience (themselves dependent on his or her particular social identity and its status in a larger social order) with the experience of a collective to which he or she perceives some affinity. The degree of this affinity will vary as a function of the relative perception of collective identity threat and hence the perception of a need to affiliate with the group at all costs (see Bar-Tal, 2004; Pettigrew, 2003).

The perception of identity threat is at its extreme in the context of conflict, when the legitimacy of identities is at stake. That is, when individuals or groups experience marginalization or discrimination most directly through state policies, as is common in a number of conflict-ridden regions of the world (see UNDP, 2004), there is likely a perceptible need to identify with the group at all costs, for the sustenance of collective identity becomes an actual question. For example, the lack of mutual recognition for both Palestinians and Israelis, both from one another and from varying sectors of the international community, means that their master narratives exist largely as stories that lack security in time

and space; they are inherently stories that are in the midst of question and challenge (e.g., Said, 1979). As a consequence, we might expect certain processes and qualities of narrative identity to be quite distinct (or at least accentuated and amplified in social and psychological space) in the context of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). The emergence of a “popular mind” (Le Bon, 1895/1969) or the manifestation of some “herd instinct” (Freud, 1921/1959) is not the inevitable outcome of social identity development. Rather, the extent to which individuals develop social identities that adhere to a master narrative of group identity and ideology likely varies with the social ecology of development and, more specifically, the perception of group identity threat in that ecology.

The case of Israelis and Palestinians clearly illustrates the salience of a master narrative in the provision of collective existential security. Yet it also reveals the way that groups create a context of mutual identity threat when an intergroup conflict is constructed as “zero sum” (see Kelman, 1999, 2007). That is, the negative interdependence of collective narratives—probably at its most transparent in the case of Israeli and Palestinian master narratives—reveals the way in which identity threat occurs by mere virtue of the existence of some other group. The only path toward reconciliation of such a conflict exists in a reconciliation and a reconstruction of these master narratives themselves, from negative to positive interdependence (Kelman, 1999).

If the personal narrative of identity provides a window into the individual’s momentary integration of experience into a life story that creates meaning and coherence, it is the ideological setting (McAdams, 1990, 1996) of that narrative that reveals its connection to the reproduction of a social structure (Gregg, 1991). Functionally, then, ideology is central to the construction of meaning that a personal narrative creates by contextualizing a life story in relation to the ideas and beliefs of an era and a particular generation (see Mannheim, 1928)—be they political or broadly cultural.

The stories of a group, then, are always infused with some ideological perspective beyond simply the events that they describe. Central to this ideology is a group’s stance toward some other group, be that group a rival of equal status, a subordinate group, or an oppressor (see Said, 1978/1994a; Tajfel, 1978b). The stories of Israelis and Palestinians, for example, contain one another as clear characters in their polarized collective narratives. Each group constructs the other as a clear antagonist in their struggle for mutual existential security and recognition.

Identity is thus constructed always in reference to some other, and nowhere is this “social fact” more apparent than in the context of intergroup or international conflict.

Although the ideological content of identity, as encoded into the life story, thus assumes a social “quality” in its reliance on referential “others,” to restrict identity operationally to the concept of the personal narrative is to deny it its inherent dynamism and, in the process, to reify identity as a kind of “static” discursive object. In addition, if we are concerned with the cultural psychology of identity, we must theorize identity in terms that possess social significance beyond an individual’s internalization of some social “sentiment.” Thus, it is to the social process of identity development that we now turn to complete the proposed formulation.

Identity as Process: Social Practice

The foundations of a perspective on identity that emphasizes practice and activity can be located in the work of two major 20th century social scientists: George Herbert Mead and Lev Vygotsky. Mead’s (1934) theory of the self focuses on self-development in the process of social interaction:

The self is not so much a substance as a process in which the conversation of gestures has been internalized within an organic form. . . . The organization of the social act has been imported into the organism and becomes then the mind of the individual. (p. 178)

For Mead, self and mind are united in the process of the social act. Minds and selves develop in the social act as they reproduce the conditions of society. Through social interaction—the “conversation of gestures”—the significant symbolic gestures necessary for successful participation in a community are internalized. He said, “Selves are constituted by or in terms of the social process, and are individual reflections of it” (p. 201).

Fundamental to Mead’s (1934) theory of self-development, then, is the notion of interaction. The interaction, he posited, is incredibly powerful in its effect on the self. The self emerges only as it recognizes itself as an object to another. In other words, self-development is socially mediated and occurs as individuals come to see themselves as objects to others in ongoing social intercourse. Identities are performed for others but also created in the performative social interaction itself (also see Goffman, 1959).

If symbolic interactionism, particularly in Mead’s (1934) original formulation, specifies a particular process of self-development in social interaction, then derivatives of Vygotsky’s (1934/1986, 1978) theories of development that emphasize the role of activity and language provide insight into the potential psychological content of these processes. Though he never spoke of identity per se, Vygotsky’s general approach to development as connected to mediated action in and through symbolic tools

such as language is quite applicable to the study of identity. In their attempt to link Vygotsky’s approach to Erikson’s theory of identity, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) suggested that Vygotsky’s notion of “inner speech” parallels Erikson’s “sense” of sameness and continuity in an individual that forms the basis of identity. It is not difficult to see the connection here between Vygotsky and a narrative approach: The act of narrating one’s life story necessarily involves the transformation of inner speech into what Vygotsky called “social speech,” thereby offering an expression of identity.

As Penuel and Wertsch (1995) noted, Vygotsky emphasized the role of cultural “tools” in development. If we apply this basic notion to identity, we can understand that “cultural and historical resources for identity formation are integral as empowering and constraining tools for identity formation” (p. 90). Again thinking in terms of the narrative approach, we can consider such resources in discourse. The cultural and historical resources with which individuals engage when constructing their identities are at base narrative resources that have the potential to infuse both inner and social speech. It is this inner speech that constructs personal identity as it is internally “sensed”; it is through social speech that identity is expressed, risked, and ultimately reformulated. Thus, there is a dynamic interplay between the individual and the social—the mind and culture—and this interplay cannot be overlooked when examining human development in context.

This dynamic interplay is recognized in conceptions of a “dialogical self” (e.g., Hermans, 2001, 2002; Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992; Holland et al., 1998), influenced by both Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981). Developmental psychologists have also increasingly emphasized the construction of self through social interaction, tracing their theoretical perspectives to the ideas of Mead and Vygotsky (e.g., Harter, 1999) or to other social and cultural perspectives (e.g., Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Nelson, 2007; Nelson & Fivush, 2004). With the increasing emphasis on “situated stories”—that is, narratives created within a particular social situation (McLean et al., 2007)—personality and social psychologists are also increasingly identifying self making as a social process (see Thorne, 2004; Thorne & Nam, in press). These scholars argue that story making in specific social contexts reveals the social process by which individuals make meaning of experience and create a coherent self, primarily through the construction of autobiographical memory (e.g., McLean et al., 2007; Pasupathi et al., 2007; Thorne, 2000; Thorne & Michaelieu, 1996).

There is a general convergence of perspective among social scientists concerned with the self that language, memory, and social interaction—all embedded in a

larger cultural and historical context—are intimately involved in the process of identity construction. In their “practice theory” of identity, Holland et al. (1998) argued that selves are constructed through discourse and practice. They introduced the notion of “figured worlds” to refer to symbolically saturated “social encounters in which participants’ positions matter” (p. 41). The essence of their perspective is that identity is rooted in social practice, which involves processes of culturally meaningful semiotic mediation (also see Andacht & Michel, 2005; Shaw, 1994; Valsiner, 2001).

Like Vygotsky, for those who emphasize practice or activity, agency is retained (Holland et al., 1998). In fact, it is precisely in the power of activity that possibilities for identity transformation, and with that cultural transformation, may occur. Stetsenko and Arieivitch (2004) applied the work of Vygotsky and Leontiev to the study of the self, arguing that the self is “endowed with the capacity to generate new cycles of practice” and facilitates the ability of individuals to “contribute to meaningfully changing the world” (p. 475). Cultural-historical activity theory—the perspective of Soviet psychologists such as Vygotsky and Leontiev—posits that human development is linked to “material social practices that, on the one hand, produce and engender social interactions and human subjectivity, and, on the other hand, are themselves reciprocally produced by these interactions and subjectivity” (p. 476). Thus, self and society are linked in a cyclically reproduced pattern of activity that both produces and is reproduced by individual selves.

Expanding this “canonical” version of activity theory, Stetsenko and Arieivitch (2004) sought to emphasize individual agency and the transactional nature of human development by arguing that the self represents a “leading activity”: “[The self is] a process of real-life activity that most explicitly positions individuals to meaningfully contribute to the ongoing social collaborative practices in the world” (p. 493). The self, then, is the key to social change in this formulation in its ability to alter social practice: “The self appears as an activity and instrument of transforming the world, as an instrument of social change” (p. 494).

In positing human activity as the primary force in shaping both individual and cultural development, the possibility of self-transformation in affecting larger social structures becomes clear. Through agency, selves can develop that either resist or reproduce the social order and in this act collectively alter a cultural landscape and an ideological “apparatus” (Althusser, 1971). But we must be careful to recognize once again the cultural variability of human development (Rogoff, 2003) and with that recognition to acknowledge the possible limits of human agency in identity development. A cultural psychology of identity necessarily recognizes that

social structural realities may limit or enhance possibilities for individual agency (e.g., Hammack, 2006).

In sum, then, the process of identity development is fundamentally social and relies on the individual’s participation in cultural practice, mediated in and through language. The narrative basis of identity is thus far from “monologic” in its creation. Rather, identity is formed in dialogue with a larger cultural system and its prescribed “interaction rituals” (Goffman, 1967). Social experience is integrated into a conception of self through the internalization of discursive norms and practices. In this way, the construction of the personal narrative that forms identity occurs in the context of a deep and meaningful social process. And it is in transformations of social processes that discourses and identities can shift to accommodate new ways of being. Transformations in individual identities can thus assume a role in the larger process of cultural change (Stetsenko & Arieivitch, 2004), although social structural realities can constrain the power of individuals to effect social change (Hammack, 2006).

CULTURE, NARRATIVE, IDENTITY: RESEARCH EXAMPLES

To illustrate the tripartite view of identity outlined here, I briefly highlight research that at least implicitly assumes the type of multilevel, interdisciplinary approach this model makes explicit. In fact, one of the primary purposes of this article is to make explicit a model of identity that is increasingly in use by psychologists who study identity in cultural context.

Positioning Identity

Of utmost concern in the integrated model proposed here is the relationship between master and personal narratives of identity. A “master” narrative, such as the two stories of 1948 that introduced this article, represents a cultural script that is readily accessible to members of a particular axis of identity, whether that be a nation (as in the case of Israel and Palestine), an ethnic group, or a gender (Thorne & McLean, 2003). Following the premises of positioning theory, which emphasizes the positions individuals take vis-à-vis some other (see Bamberg, 1997; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), the work of Bamberg (2004) and Thorne and McLean (2003) exemplifies a situated approach to identity that queries the relationship between master narratives, or cultural scripts, and personal narratives.

Thorne and McLean (2003) collected narratives of traumatic events from American late adolescents. They examined emotional positions as revealed by three

master narratives of coping with trauma available in American culture: (a) the “John Wayne” narrative, which focuses on action and fortitude, (b) the “vulnerable” narrative, which emphasizes internal experience of fear and sadness, and (c) the “Florence Nightingale” narrative, which emphasizes concern for others. Not surprising, given the gendered aspect of these master narratives, women were far more likely to construct narratives consistent with the “Florence Nightingale” story. The connection between narrative and the reproduction of social categories (in this case gender) is highlighted in this study, supporting the notion of identity as a construct that links self and society through narratives that provide meaning to social categories.

The gendered nature of master narratives is also a focus of Bamberg’s (2004) study of “slut-bashing” in the discourse of a group of 15-year-old American males. Bamberg assumed a micro-social approach to identity construction through talk. In analyzing an interaction among boys, he argued that gendered master narratives in which participants assume a particular position vis-à-vis the object of discourse (in this case, an ostensibly promiscuous female peer) are reproduced through talk. It is in the interaction that identities are constructed, as individuals engage with master narratives and often reproduce their content.

Redemption and American Identity

Scholars who focus on positioning tend to assume a micro-social approach. By contrast, McAdams’s (2006) recent work, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*, offers an analysis of American identity that considers the relationship between personal and master narratives apart from the context of discourse in interaction. Rather, McAdams examined the ways in which the master narrative of American identity, with its particular historical foundation, is infused into the individual life stories of highly generative adults. He argued in this book, which represents the culmination of decades of research on generativity in adulthood (e.g., McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993; McAdams et al., 1997; McAdams, Ruetzel, & Foley, 1986), that Americans engage with a master narrative of redemption as they construct their life stories. That is, a collective narrative that emphasizes the possibility of individual redemption, because it is foundational in American discourse (both historically and contemporarily), tends to underlie individual life stories that Americans construct. In this way, narrative engagement for many Americans results in the reproduction of a master narrative through the construction of the individual life story.

McAdams (2006) identified an American master narrative of redemption as “deliverance from suffering to a

better world” (p. 7). Such a narrative is connected to the historical experience of early European settlers in the colonial and postcolonial eras of American history, and it has a deeply religious foundation at its core. With the economic and technological advancement of American society during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, such a master narrative was affirmed for its ability to foster a sense of “chosenness” or exceptionality (McAdams, 2006).

One can immediately see the connection between this kind of master narrative and the reproduction of a particular economic order (cf. Weber, 1930), for the idea of redemption suggests tremendous possibility for achievement and success. Beyond an economic value, though, engagement with a redemptive master narrative emphasizes the trope of individual resilience, even in the face of struggle. In this way, McAdams argued, it can lead to tremendous generativity in adult life. Highly generative adults tend to infuse their life stories with the general form, thematic content, and ideological setting of redemption.

To the extent that McAdams’s work queries the relationship between a master narrative of American redemption and the personal narratives of highly generative adults, it assumes a cultural psychology approach. Where his work diverges from the model proposed here is in its tendency to examine the life story at a single telling and analytically removed from the social process of its construction. But his work clearly embraces an approach that considers identity structure in narrative terms, and he accords primacy to the ideological content of life stories.

The main distinction between McAdams’s overall theoretical framework and the one advanced in this article is primarily connected to the emphasis on culture and the role of agency in identity development. Likely because his work is based in the American cultural context, McAdams’s approach tends to ascribe significant agency to individuals as they construct their life stories. In the perspective advanced here, I want to suggest that the relationship between a master narrative and a personal narrative is highly contingent on the cultural context of development. As a consequence, the agency that individuals possess to construct life stories varies considerably (e.g., Hammack, 2006), and it is precisely the cultural conditions of this variability that require empirical and theoretical attention in social, personality, and cultural psychology.

Making a Gay Identity: History and Stories of Sexual Desire

The recent work of Cohler and colleagues (e.g., Cohler, 2004, 2007; Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2000; Cohler & Hammack, 2006, 2007; Cohler & Hostetler,

2002; Cohler, Hostetler, & Boxer, 1998) on gay male identity development also implicitly adopts aspects of the proposed model. The focus of this work has been on the historical and generational construction of gay male identity and the ways in which historical and cultural context matters deeply in sexual identity development for men with same-sex desire (also see Hammack, 2005b). While the examples of redemption and positioning of gendered narratives illustrate narrative identity as a self-society link as individuals engage with master narratives, the historical basis of sexual identity narratives reveals the way in which personal narratives can disrupt dominant discourses in a society, thereby destabilizing master narratives of identity.

Cohler (1982) argued that the personal narrative represents the psychological mechanism by which individuals make meaning and coherence of their lives. The way in which a life story is told—its form, structure, and content—is highly dependent on the historical and cultural location of human development. In the case of men with same-sex desire, Cohler (2007) demonstrated the impact of belonging to a particular generation cohort on the narration of a life story (also see Cohler & Hammack, 2006). In fact, the radical historical shifts in sexual identity politics in the United States during the course of the 20th and early 21st centuries have resulted in highly cohort-specific identity development processes for individuals with same-sex desire (also see Savin-Williams, 2005; A. Stein, 1997).

Following the personological tradition of psychobiography (e.g., Erikson, 1958, 1969; McAdams & Ochberg, 1988; Runyan, 1982; Schultz, 2005), Cohler (2007) examined gay male identity development in the United States through the lens of life stories. The cohort specificity of life stories in this case reveals quite saliently the historical forces that shape identity because the meaning associated with social categories of sexual identity changed radically across 20th century America. Men born in the 1930s found themselves furtively engaging in same-sex behavior and quietly forming a community in urban contexts in the 1950s. This cohort of men was instrumental in the social organization that led to a vibrant movement for recognition, destigmatization, and political rights in the 1960s, culminating in the famous Stonewall Inn riots of 1969. By contrast, men born in the 1950s came of age in the liberated sexual culture of the 1970s—a time just beyond the achievements of the gay liberation movement but before the tragic onset of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. With the advent of technology that easily connects men with same-sex desire, along with the dramatically increased representation of sexual minorities in film and television, today's cohort of gay men are increasingly resisting traditional categories of sexual identity in

favor of the more flexible “queer” identity (Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Savin-Williams, 2005).

Focusing on the life stories of six generations of men, Cohler's work reveals that the life story itself is a cultural and historical product. Although this approach has been recognized in the narratives of women with same-sex desire (e.g., Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1995; Ponce, 1978), particularly in disciplines beyond psychology (e.g., A. Stein, 1997), Cohler's personological and historical approach to examining gay male identity development in the United States is innovative and challenges the dominant narrative of biological determinism in male sexual orientation (e.g., Bailey & Pillard, 1991; for review, see E. Stein, 1999).

The work of Cohler and colleagues adopts two key aspects of the model proposed here in its theoretical and methodological approach. First, it conceives of identity structure in narrative terms. It is through the personal narrative that a coherent identity is constructed, and narrative methods thus offer accessibility to the integrative construct of identity. Second, in connecting gay male identity to social practice associated with a distinct culture, Cohler's work assumes that personal narratives are products of dynamic engagement with a master narrative of identity (e.g., Cohler & Hammack, 2007). For example, a central argument in Cohler's work is that gay identity is “made,” not simply “given” (e.g., Cohler, 2007; Cohler & Hammack, 2006). Although this constructionist approach may strike some as controversially suggesting that homosexuality is a matter of choice and free will, such is not the argument. Although identity is constructed through meaningful social practice, consistent with both a Vygotskian perspective and a classic symbolic interactionist approach (cf. Holland et al., 1998), desire is not considered a matter of “choice” (see Hammack, 2005b). This distinction is key and suggests a way in which the essentialist-constructionist divide in research on sexual identity may be transcended (Hammack, 2005b).

The Cultural Psychology of Moroccan Identity

Gregg's (2005, 2007) recent work on identity in Morocco, and in the Middle East and North Africa more broadly, offers an example of an approach that integrates individual and cultural levels of analysis as it illustrates the significance of narrative in the context of perceived identity threat. Like McAdams and Cohler, Gregg is also strongly influenced by the personological perspective of Henry Murray (1938) and the “study of lives” tradition. From a methodological perspective, it makes sense that scholars working in this tradition would best conform to at least an implicit application of the model of identity proposed here, for the model commands attention to a

holistic approach to the person. Gregg's work extends the basic approach of scholars such as Cohler and McAdams beyond the American cultural context, which provides greater cross-cultural validity to such an approach.

Theoretically, Gregg's recent work is a natural extension of his self-representation theory of identity in which he conceived of life narratives as reflections of the "macrosocial order" (Gregg, 1991, p. xv). Such a theoretical approach is highly consistent with the model of identity proposed in this article, for it conceives of personality integration through a dynamic engagement with culture. That Gregg's (1991) original theoretical focus privileges the ideological basis of narratives also speaks to its consistency with the model proposed here.

With its focus on the Middle East and North Africa, Gregg's (2005, 2007) work is particularly relevant to the cultural psychology of identity politics in the contemporary world. His regional influence allows us to query the psychological impact of globalization (Arnett, 2002) and postcolonialism (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978/1994a) on identity. The large-scale social, historical, and economic changes of the 20th and early 21st centuries that afflict this region of the world present competing narratives of identity to which individuals are exposed. Gregg (2005, 2007) focused in particular on the ways in which the larger cultural struggle between "Western modernity" and local tradition heavily influenced by Islam is negotiated as individuals construct their own life stories.

Gregg's (2007) four comprehensive case studies of Moroccans reveal the way in which larger cultural narratives are encoded into individual life stories. Hussein's narrative reveals how an individual concern with "becoming modern," reflected in preferences for his life, is connected to Morocco's own struggle to negotiate the demands of modernity with the preservation of tradition—a common dilemma for individuals in the "developing" world. Gregg's (2007) analysis of Hussein also reveals the way in which a discourse associated with Islam is infused into his life story. Hussein focuses on the lives of prophets and religious imagery as he integrates aspects of his spiritual socialization into his personal identity.

Gregg's (2007) work also challenges the traditional dichotomy of individualism–collectivism in contemporary cultural psychology by revealing the rich sense of independence with which Moroccans construct their life stories. Despite the unique ways in which these individuals construct their personal narratives, though, they all must negotiate master narratives of identity associated with gender and gender roles, religion, and economic underdevelopment and its implications. It is in the permutations of this process that the cultural psychology of identity reveals its epistemological utility, for it allows

us to view person and culture as coconstitutive. Gregg's timely and important work on culture and identity in the Middle East and North Africa reveals the vitality of a narrative approach to the study of lives in context.

Conflict and Identity Polarization: Stories of Israeli and Palestinian Youth

To conclude the concrete research examples, let us return to the problem of Israeli and Palestinian identity, or, better put, the possibility of mutual identity recognition and existential security for Palestinians and Israelis. Since 2003, I have conducted field research with Palestinian and Israeli youth engaged in intergroup contact. The focus of this work has been to examine identity development in the context of intractable conflict as well as to examine the impact of intergroup contact on the seemingly inevitable polarization of identities that characterizes the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (for a detailed description of the study, see Hammack, 2006).

In this research, I have collected life-story narratives of youth at several points across adolescence. In the grounded theory methodological approach of this work (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the contextual embeddedness, as well as the significance of my own identity as neither Arab nor Jewish, is recognized and integrated into my interpretive analysis (see Myerhoff & Ruby, 1992; also see Langhout, 2006). My analytic emphasis has been on the form and content of youth narratives and the way in which they do or do not appropriate master narratives of collective history and identity. Because the fundamental problem of Israel–Palestine may be characterized as a competition of identities (e.g., Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998), rooted in the sustenance of incompatible and negatively interdependent narratives (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Kelman, 1999; Rotberg, 2006; Salomon & Nevo, 2001), the relationship between master narratives and the personal narratives of youth offers much insight into the evolution of antagonism between these peoples.

My longitudinal research with youth suggests a strong tendency to reproduce a master narrative of identity that contributes to the reproduction of conflict in its inherent negative interdependence, even in the context of a well-crafted intervention to thwart this process (Hammack, 2006). Jewish Israeli youth tend to construct personal narratives that assume a redemptive form, in which challenges are typically proceeded by gain or stabilization (Hammack, in press). The primary trope of this kind of story is a resilient one: that there is formidable strength through struggle (see Zerubavel, 1995). Jewish Israeli youth also appropriate thematic content that closely approximates the master narrative of collective identity, including existential insecurity

(see Hareven, 1983), historical persecution and victimization of Jews in the Diaspora (e.g., Pinsker, 1882/1997), identity alienation in the region, and at least the partial delegitimization of Palestinian identity (see Bar-Gal, 1994; Bar-Tal, 1990, 1998). The idea of security represents the overarching trope that unites these experiential themes in the master narrative of Jewish Israeli identity (Bar-Tal, 1998; Jacobson & Bar-Tal, 1995). Beliefs about security and the need for a strong defense institution are subsequently infused into the personal narratives of youth, often in a highly gendered form that connects masculinity, security, and nationalism (see Nagel, 1998).

Ideologically, contemporary Jewish Israeli youth negotiate at least two discourses on peace and the surrounding Arab world, including the Palestinians: secure insulation (“right-wing” political perspective) or significant territorial concession for peace with the Palestinians, which will in turn create a more harmonious relationship with the rest of the Arab Middle East (“left-wing” political perspective; see Kimmerling, 2001). My research suggests that youth negotiate this ideological polarization within Israeli society as they construct personal narratives of identity, and their local social ecologies of development are important sites of ideological exposure that influence their own life stories significantly (Hammack, *in press*).

Palestinian youth also tend to closely appropriate a master narrative of collective identity, but the form of their master narrative offers a stark contrast to Jewish Israelis (Hammack, 2008). Like the Palestinian master narrative, contemporary Palestinian youth tend to construct life stories that assume a tragic or contaminated form (see McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001). Themes of loss and unjust dispossession (Said, 1979, 1994b), trauma (Awwad, 2004), legitimacy of resistance to the Israeli occupation (Arafat, 1974/2001), existential insecurity (Collins, 2004; Khalidi, 1997), fatalism, and lack of economic opportunity (Roy, 2004) permeate the personal narratives of Palestinian youth. Youth attribute great meaning to the master narrative of Palestinian identity, supporting previous work that suggests the benefits of ideological commitment and the attribution of collective meaning in contexts of intractable conflict and political violence (e.g., Barber, 1999, 2001; Jagodić, 2000; Punamäki, 1996).

Like Jewish Israeli youth, Palestinian youth do not display uniform delegitimization of the out-group identity in their personal narratives. Many, in fact, advocate for a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that explicitly acknowledges the existence of two distinct national and cultural identities. Ideologically, though, the settings of Palestinian life stories reveal remarkable variability, particularly between the traditional postcolonial

secular nationalist narrative of Fatah and the religious nationalist narrative of Hamas. As for Jewish Israeli youth, for Palestinian youth this kind of variability in ideological settings reveals a dynamic engagement with the master narrative of collective identity, itself in a place of contestation along the gradual path to reconciliation and conflict resolution.

In sum, in terms of both content and structure, the personal narratives of Palestinian and Israeli youth tend to reproduce the master narrative of collective identity, even as they do engage with contested elements of the master narrative. The process through which this reproduction occurs is deeply social and centers on an engagement with the larger structural reality of intractable conflict. The matrix of possible social practices associated with intergroup harmony and cooperation is extremely limited by the social structure and cultural context in which they engage with master narratives. Yet a narrative approach that is simultaneously ethnographic and idiographic reveals the complexity of cultural communities by revealing intracultural variability. A cultural psychology of identity anchored in narrative provides valuable insights into what is both shared and contested among members of a given cultural community.

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this article was to articulate a novel integrative framework for the study of identity in cultural context that would enhance the potential contributions of personality, social, and cultural psychologists to interdisciplinary conversations on identity. To conclude, I focus on this underlying motivation—the intellectual impetus for the article—as I suggest concrete directions for theory and empirical research in psychology. I say more about the broader conversation on identity in the humanities and social sciences, and I suggest that a cultural psychology of identity that embraces the theoretical and methodological implications of the model proposed here represents a pathway to greater participation in this conversation.

Identity is a transdisciplinary, highly relevant concern in the contemporary context of human social development. As a key theoretical link between the individual and a sociocultural context, the idea of identity has long been of interest to scholars in diverse social science fields. However, perspectives on identity have grown particularly insulated along disciplinary lines, rendering communication across fields and studies at times challenging and, at worst, incomprehensible (see Moshman, 2007).

The public scholarly discourse on identity is concerned foremost with “identity politics,” centering on

the ways in which social structures and policies construct a matrix of identity (or “social categorization,” in more social psychological terms; Tajfel, 1978b; also see Sampson, 1993) that either promotes or limits cultural inclusion of various groups (e.g., Gutmann, 2003; Sen, 2006). Although this scholarship is both vital and highly successful in its ability to highlight issues of structural violence (Galtung, 1971), oppression, marginalization, and social injustice, what is typically missing is a consideration of individual subjectivity—a concern with the ways in which individuals engage with social structural realities (see Hurtado et al., 1994). As a consequence, a concern for distinctly psychological perspectives on identity has largely been absent from such formulations (Moshman, 2007).

The challenge to individual subjectivity as a meaningful consideration in poststructuralist thought notwithstanding (e.g., Foucault, 1982; Sampson, 1983), the model proposed here suggests that there is indeed a place for psychology in the public intellectual discourse on identity. Specific research directions that seem most obvious center on methodologically and theoretically innovative projects that are inherently interdisciplinary but that retain a clear commitment to the individual as a meaningful unit of analysis, consistent with perspectives in personality and social psychology. First, research that utilizes such a model of identity must embrace the ethnographic method, with its emphasis on the delineation of context and its commitment to a field approach (e.g., Jessor et al., 1996). Second, the recognition of the value of an idiographic approach, particularly for theory development, is inherent in research that adopts the proposed model (e.g., Schachter, 2005). Despite the fact that the individual person has long been recognized as the primary unit of analysis in the discipline of psychology (e.g., Allport, 1962), the gradual ascendance of aggregate statistical methods has rendered most information generated by psychological research entirely nomothetic (see Lamiell, 1981, 1987, 1998, 2003; Porter, 1986). It is, therefore, not information about individuals but about groups of individuals, and the information generated speaks not to generalizable knowledge about individuals but rather to probabilistic statements about aggregates (Lamiell, 2003; Lamiell & Weigert, 1996). A concern for human individuality and the distinction of psychological experience does not render the knowledge generated “ungeneralizable.” Rather, such an epistemological approach recognizes the contextual basis of the life course (Elder, 1998) and the historical basis of psychological knowledge (Gergen, 1973). A focus on distinction and specificity is a healthy foil to psychology’s metatheoretical reliance on notions of “psychic unity” (see Fiske & Shweder, 1986; Shweder, 1990) that increases the discipline’s relevance in a pluralistic world.

The methodological combination of ethnography and idiography reveals the model proposed in this article to be inherently multilevel and thus concerned with a fully contextualized perspective on personhood. Although the division of the study of human social life into unique social science disciplines (and subdisciplines) makes sense as we seek to understand a multiplicity of sensory information, a rigid adherence to disciplinary foci obscures the complete picture of human experience in the social world. Early approaches in social psychology, for example, were often inherently interdisciplinary—or “transdisciplinary” (Aram, 2004)—in their assumption of a “problem-centered,” rather than “discipline-centered” or “variable-centered” (see Hammack, 2005a; Mishler, 1990, 1999), approach (e.g., Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1958; Sherif, 1958; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972). Research that adopts the model of identity proposed here must, in embodying authentic transdisciplinarity, integrate levels of analysis in interrogating identity. It is not, therefore, decontextualized knowledge about the universality of personhood that is sought, though such information may be revealed through such inquiries. Rather, it is an enculturated, socially situated, and fully contextualized person that such a research approach seeks to illuminate (see McAdams, 1995; Thorne, 2004).

Having delineated a rather naively optimistic research vision for such a paradigm of identity, let me now acknowledge some of the formidable obstacles to engaging in the type of research for which this model calls. First, psychology’s underlying metatheoretical reliance on a principle of psychic unity is deeply entrenched (Shweder, 1990), and young investigators who embrace a view of psychological diversity and a person-centered approach are doubly marginalized in the discipline. Of course, Kuhn (1962) would naturally view the tension in scientific psychology on these issues as part of the course of “normal science” and “paradigm shift.” As the science of psychology evolves, it is sensible that epistemological approaches should change with the recognition of “anomalies” (Kuhn, 1962) that the prior paradigm cannot explain. Such is the impetus for a resurrected notion of cultural psychology that considers (and embraces) the variability of human psychological experience across social ecologies of development.

A second, far more concrete obstacle to conducting identity research using the model proposed here centers on the problem of feasibility. A multilevel, multimethod approach requires formidable resources, not the least of which is time. Unfortunately, the pressure young investigators face to produce as much as possible tends to reproduce a status-quo reliance on undergraduate psychology students as participants in decontextualized experiments and surveys (Gergen, 1973; Sears, 1986).

As a consequence, the notion of comprehensive field research can seem infeasible with the professional constraints placed on young psychologists. Yet I would argue that the discovery of knowledge cannot be dictated by the cultural practices of the discipline itself, for the internalization of such a model for research practice can only keep psychological knowledge insulated from the potential of its real-world relevance.

The theoretical framework of culture and identity proposed here serves two important intellectual functions. First, it serves to unite disparate scholarship across the social sciences on the problem of identity in a globalized, multicultural world. In such a context for contemporary human development, the idea of identity offers a vital intellectual bridge between disciplines in its ability to transcend levels of analysis and, in the process, reveal the link between the structures of social life and their manifestations in individual subjectivity. With its metatheoretical grounding in the interdisciplinary paradigm of cultural psychology, the model proposed here avoids the trappings of both radical positivism, with its faith in decontextualized knowledge, and skeptical postmodernism, with its doubt in a knowable world (Shweder, 2003).

The second intellectual function suggested by the proposed integrative model is a renewed explicit voice for psychology in the discourse on identity politics. An approach that explicitly acknowledges roles for ideology and discourse as dynamically engaged with by individual members of a given cultural context and internalized in the form of a life-story narrative reconciles notions of individual and collective identity. The empirical examination of the relationship between a collective narrative and an individual life story, and the conditions under which that relationship varies, infuses approaches to the politics of identity in fields such as history (e.g., Khalidi, 1997; Suny, 2001), political science (e.g., Gutmann, 2003), and cultural studies (e.g., Bauman, 2004; Hall & du Gay, 1996) with tremendous vitality and credibility.

The place for psychology—and social, personality, and context-focused developmental psychology in particular—in public scholarship on identity lies in its ability to focus on the ways in which individual lives are connected to a sociocultural reality, with its institutions, social structures, economic system, and underlying collective narratives of groups and intergroup relations. Psychologists have much to offer to this vibrant intellectual discussion, so long as they are willing to reflexively engage with new methods and epistemologies.

To be a social science that is fully engaged in the real problems that characterize human mental life, psychology must recognize that its commitment to rigorous empiricism need not privilege certain epistemologies over others. Rather, a commitment to the betterment of human lives

and to social justice, either implicit or explicit in most social psychological research (e.g., Allport, 1954; Bullock & Lott, 2001; Deutsch, 2006; Haney & Zimbardo, 1998; Lott & Bullock, 2007; Sherif, 1958; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), requires an intellectual approach that is engaged with the challenges of actual human living, fully contextualized. To the extent that such an acknowledgment contributes to radical revolutions in our paradigms for making sense of the knowable world, we are participants in Kuhn's (1962) vision of the cycle of "normal science" and hence maximizing our commitment to the vision of science and human progress, however antithetical to a postmodern epistemology that vision may in fact be.

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