Because of the increasing diversification of the United States and more frequent intergroup contact through globalization, people confront a greater number of situations that impel them to consider themselves in terms of social categories. In addition, in the United States, issues such as changing immigration patterns, the significant growth of the black middle class, and an increase in dual-career families have widened people's options for self-definition and social categorization. But this widening of options also creates greater potential for role and identity diffusion, identity conflicts, marginalization, and a host of other challenges to individuals' sense of belonging and self-coherence. Therefore, it is perhaps more urgent to conduct research that furthers the understanding of social identity and self-categorization. Toward this end, we have charged the contributors of this volume with addressing several questions concerning people's membership in social groups and their sense of who they are: What is social identity? How and for what does it matter? Which identities matter most?

This volume grew out of an interest in such questions on the part of members of the Social Identity Consortium, a working group funded by the Russell Sage Foundation to advance collaborative research and scholarship on social identity. The contributors, scholars with established expertise in some aspect of social identity, have taken up the challenge of examining people's identification and engagement with institutions such as government, community, educational institutions, work organizations, and families. The central message in the volume is that social identities matter for individuals as they confront societally and personally significant life tasks and transitions. Identities are both a source of stress and a source of strength as people go about their daily lives, especially in contexts where their most important identities are challenged or threatened. In this volume, we highlight the efforts of many scholars to
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understand how people seek to balance these costs and benefits and to discover ways to most effectively minimize the former and maximize the latter.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL IDENTITY?

There is a growing consensus that identities are best viewed as multidimensional and dynamic, that identity activation is highly context-dependent, and that identity transformation is constantly occurring. Although the contributors generally accept this view, their operationalization of the construct reflects the types of questions being addressed in a particular paper, as well as differences in theoretical orientation. Four main approaches to operationalizing identity are explored in this volume:

1. Identity as a social category
2. Individual differences in subjective meanings of social-category membership
3. Particular dimensions of social identity
4. Qualitative differences in individuals’ orientation to social identity

(For a more extensive review of identity operationalization see Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004.)

In the first approach, utilizing the most basic definition of social identity, social identity is operationalized as a categorical membership that is shared with others who have some characteristic in common. The assumption is that acknowledging oneself as a category member implicitly encompasses many important aspects of group identity, including beliefs about group stereotypes. The basis of Claude Steele’s theory of stereotype threat (Steele and Aronson 1995), reviewed by Jason S. Lawrence, Jennifer Crocker, and Carol S. Dweck in chapter 2, is that the mere acknowledgment of shared category membership in a domain where one’s group is negatively stereotyped can give rise to a sense of threat that undermines performance. In a daily-diary study of identity activation, Bonita London, Geraldine Downey, Niall Bolger, and Elizabeth Velilla (chapter 3) show that members of devalued groups report more events where their membership in that group was relevant than members of more privileged groups. The strength of the self-categorization approach to social identity lies in documenting the powerful consequences of simply making salient one’s membership in a stereotyped group. The approach does, however, leave unexplained precisely how identifying oneself as a member of a particular category leads to underperformance. Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck in chapter 2 undertake the task of unpacking this “black box” of social identity and underperformance by exploring differences in belief systems and motivations that can help clarify this phenomenon. Finally, self-categorization does not readily permit assessment of intragroup differences in how people identify with their social groups.

The second approach, one emphasizing individual differences in what membership in a category means, is exemplified in Robert Sellers’s Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Sellers et al. 1997, described in Shelton et al., chapter 5, this volume).
This approach can be used to identify how specific dimensions combine to influence adaptation and adjustment. There is still no consensus on what dimensions are involved in identity, and different multidimensional theories emphasize different dimensions of identity (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004). Nonetheless, identity scholars generally agree on the significance of the following dimensions of identity (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004):

- Importance of one’s group membership
- Personal regard for one’s group
- Attachment to one’s group
- Ideological stance vis-à-vis one’s group and the dominant, or superordinate, group
- Perceptions of how others’ view one’s group
- Behavioral engagement with one’s group members and cultural practices

Although these dimensions tend to be positively correlated, there is ample evidence in several chapters in this volume (see especially chapters 5 and 6) that identity is better understood by examining combinations of these dimensions than by treating them as interchangeable indicators of a single latent construct. For example, Nicole Shelton et al. (chapter 5) propose that viewing one’s ethnicity or race positively is protective for those who perceive their ethnicity or race to be an important part of the self, whereas it is not protective for those whose race is not an important aspect of the self.

In the third approach to operationalizing social identity, examining a particular dimension of identity, two broad dimensions are typically the focus: how one sees oneself in relation to the group (the strength and positivity with which one views one’s membership in the group, the closeness or attachment to the group, or the level of one’s identification with the group) and how others view one’s group. Illustrating this emphasis, chapter 9 examines sensitivity to status-based rejection (Mendoza-Denton et al. 2002)—which refers to one’s expectations and concerns about how others will treat one because of one’s group membership. The chapters in part IV all support the finding that being high on the first dimension, positive identification and regard for one’s social group membership, is linked with more adaptive functioning under stress, whereas being high on the second dimension of concern about, expecting, and perceiving rejection or discrimination from others because of one’s social category membership increases vulnerability in situations and contexts where one’s group is negatively stereotyped.

The fourth approach is to identify qualitatively different orientations toward identity. William E. Cross Jr.’s black identity theory, described by Linda Strauss and Cross in chapter 4, exemplifies this approach. What Cross calls “negrescence theory” is rooted in the view that the identity-relevant socialization task of black parents is to teach their children to deal with the mainstream, with oppression, and with relationships with the black community. Three qualitatively different stances have been
isolated that reflect different socialization emphases: (1) an assimilationist, or pre-encounter, stance, whereby race and black culture are accorded limited importance; (2) an immersion-emersion stance, whereby oppression and intragroup bonding are emphasized, but from a militantly antiwhite perspective; and (3) an internalization stance, whereby race and black culture are accorded much importance but in the context of a resolved, achieved identity. There are interesting parallels among these orientations and the racial ideologies identified by Robert Sellers et al. (1997).

HOW AND FOR WHAT DO SOCIAL IDENTITIES MATTER?

While contemporary discourse around issues of diversity is generally positive, it is still widely recognized that there are challenges to multiple groups’ coexistence within shared spaces. For instance, in this era of “identity politics,” multiple factions have formed on the basis of shared social group memberships and compete with each other for political and economic representation. One example is the post–September 11 emergence of an Arab American faction, comprising individuals from nations as diverse as Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq. This ethnic group, comprising a number of otherwise distinct ethnicities, has emerged partly in response to others’ treatment of them as one monolithic group, and perhaps also in part because their cultural and political solidarity affords them greater visibility in such a diverse society as that of the United States. In this volume we explore how people cope with such demands of living in a diverse society, especially as they work toward the accomplishment of important life tasks such as educational attainment and the formation of social relationships.

What Is Coping?

Just as the chapters differ in how they operationalize social identity, they differ in how they operationalize coping. The impact of a stressor on important life outcomes, such as health and achievement, depend on how it is coped with. Effective coping can buffer against the negative effects of stressors, and thus plays a great role in the discussion of life tasks. One important distinction in definitions of coping is between generic ways of coping, such as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and support seeking (see chapter 3), that are enlisted in the service of identity-relevant challenges, and identity-related ways of coping—called ways of enacting by Strauss and Cross (chapter 4) and negotiating identity by Celina M. Chatman, Jacquelynne Eccles, and Oksana Malanchuck (chapter 6)—that are an inherent aspect of identity development.

A second distinction is whether the emphasis is on tactics or strategies used to deal with a specific challenge or on more global beliefs that guide coping in particular situations. Both London et al. (chapter 3) and Strauss and Cross (chapter 4) identify specific tactics used in challenging situations in daily life. London et al. draw on the stress and coping literature to identify generic tactics for dealing with interpersonal stress (self-silencing, confronting the other person, transforming the situation into something less threatening). By contrast, Cross and Strauss focus on identity-related coping tactics utilized by black individuals to deal with different types of racialized
situations. The types of identity-related coping that they must engage in include stigma management (buffering); mainstream management (code switching); intimacy with selected whites (bridging); positive connectivity with blacks (bonding); and experiences with personal self (individualism). Abigail J. Stewart and Andrea L. Dottolo (chapter 8) use a hybrid of these two approaches. Drawing on the stress and coping literature, they identify broad categories of tactics for coping with stress (including emotion- and problem-focused coping, and enlisting social support) but then, drawing on qualitative data, they describe how these generic coping tactics are customized to fit situations where aspects of preexisting core identities are being challenged in the process of forming a new identity.

Global beliefs that guide coping in specific situations are highlighted in chapters 2, 4, and 5. Drawing on Carol Dweck’s work (1999), Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck in chapter 2 discuss the role that implicit beliefs about intelligence, as either a fixed entity or malleable quality, may have in mediating the link between the activation of stereotype threat and performance. The basic idea is that viewing intelligence as a fixed attribute can diminish effort and persistence in the face of difficulty whereas viewing intelligence as malleable can motivate persistence. Shelton et al. (chapter 5) and Strauss and Cross (chapter 4) draw attention to how one’s global ideological stance on the relation of one’s group with the dominant group—for example, whether one is assimilationist, nationalist, or bicultural or integrated—can guide what specific identity-related coping tactics and identity enactments one uses in specific situations.

Other possible ways in which social identity can aid coping are briefly alluded to in several chapters. For example, a shared group identity can provide access to the support of other group members, and the shared community can also be drawn upon as a source of motivation to deal with the challenge or as a source of perceived support or inspiration. Thus, the community with whom one is identified can act as a source of perceived support that aids coping.

Life Task: Engagement in Educational Institutions

This volume examines not only how social identities matter in people’s coping with a variety of circumstances but also where—in what specific aspects of life—they matter. The chapters demonstrate that identities matter for mental and psychological health, for all forms of interpersonal relationships, and for the process of setting valued goals that we are willing to work vigorously and sacrifice much to attain. The particular life task that is the focus of most of the chapters in this volume is obtaining an education. Why education? Irrespective of ethnicity, race, religion, or economic circumstances, all parents want their children to do well educationally. Becoming educated prepares people to be healthy, productive, engaged, and valued members of society, and the extent of success or failure in this task has critical implications for many important life domains. Beyond simply missing out on education, high school dropouts suffer significant psychological, economic, and social costs. Dropouts are two and a half times more likely than high school graduates to be on welfare and four times more likely to be unemployed. Dropouts are more likely to be arrested and make up over 80 percent of the prison population. High school
dropouts between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four earn about two thirds as much as their graduate peers (Bhanupri and Reynolds 2003). These significant personal and societal costs reflect the importance of successful engagement in school. In studying how the individual negotiates the life task of acquiring education, focus must be placed on what factors and experiences hinder or promote successful engagement. Despite the great importance of academic engagement in later-life success, there is evidence that not every demographic group fares equally well. The consensus in this volume is that social identity may be a critical factor that helps both explain and moderate this evidence.

At all academic levels blacks and Latinos fare worse than other groups. The testing program of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in existence for three decades, consistently shows that African American and Hispanic students underperform relative to their white peers in reading, math, and science when tested at the end of middle school (eighth grade) and high school (College Board 1998). NAEP data also show that at the "proficient" and "advanced" levels in all three subjects, African American and Latino students severely lag behind whites and Asian students (College Board 1998). Similar patterns emerge for SAT scores, with the gap actually becoming wider over time (Bennett et al. 2004). These achievement differences appear not to be reducible to socioeconomic status. Data collected since the 1950s show that the achievement gap exists, and remains, across all levels of socioeconomic status, and may in fact be most pronounced at the middle and higher social classes (College Board 1998). These patterns have clear ramifications for college acceptance rates and the fulfillment of life tasks that this volume focuses on.

These differences can not be attributed to a lack of achievement motivation. Black Americans' historical commitment to education is well documented. At the end of the American Civil War, ex-slaves' motivation to be educated reflected their realization that education distinguished the privileged and powerful slave owners from the poor and powerless white peasants (Butchart 1980; Webber 1978). Immediately following the end of slavery, several historically black colleges, including Howard University were established (DuBois 1935). However, in the mainstream of American higher education, reactionary forces won out and from the late 1880s to the late 1960s, blacks were systematically excluded from many institutions of higher education. In addition, blacks' elementary schools were underfunded and the few high schools available to them were trade schools. Such institutionalized economic and political disadvantage and discrimination is the historical context of today's gap between blacks and other groups in the area of education and achievement.

Today, although structural barriers to the entry of black and Latino students into college have been largely removed, at the nation's top institutions these students typically receive lower grades on average than similarly qualified white students (Bowen and Bok 1998). Those who graduate are less likely to pursue doctoral degrees and academic careers, perpetuating the underrepresentation of black students and faculty at these universities and compromising the recruitment and training of future generations of black and Latino Americans for leadership roles in society.

The subject of gender differences in educational success is an interesting counterpoint to racial and ethnic differences. Women's educational success surpasses that of men at all but the highest levels (Eagly and Karau 2002). They are more likely to com-
plete high school and to enter college, where they are also successful. Yet differences emerge favoring men in domains that are male-stereotyped, such as the sciences, especially at the graduate school level. At that stage, women begin to drop out of the pipeline; like academically successful blacks and Latinos, they are less likely to pursue academic careers than equally qualified men. Why are women and blacks and Latinos apparently choosing not to enter some fields and why do they not pursue academic careers? In chapter 8, Stewart and Dottolo propose that the social identity of “graduate student” may conflict more with what it means to be a woman or a member of an ethnic or racial minority than to be a white man. Thus, the issue of compatibility of identities, in this case social and educational identities is of great concern in efforts to understand the enduring legacy of structural barriers to educational attainment.

WHICH IDENTITIES MATTER MOST?

In this volume we focus on identities associated with membership in relatively large, visible, underprivileged groups. Specifically, we highlight three salient organizing forces within U.S. social life, and, indeed, throughout much of the world: Race, ethnicity, and gender. Both race and gender are commonly viewed as master categories because of their perceptual salience and relative immutability. Ethnic group membership is also highly salient but not always as perceptible. Nonetheless, ethnic differences, perhaps especially among racially similar people, are the basis of much conflict and strife worldwide. Ethnicity refers to characteristics of a current or once geographically contiguous set of people that are socially as well as genetically transmitted (Ocampo, Bernal, and Knight 1993). These characteristics include cultural values, language, race, traditions, religion, and behavioral practices. Hispanic ethnic identity receives most attention in this volume.

Because race, ethnicity, and gender continue to reflect differential access to power and privilege, ostensibly similar developmental contexts pose greater challenges to forming a positive self-identity for members of less privileged categories (nonwhite, being of non-European origin, and women) than for those of more privileged categories (white, being of European origin, and men). For the privileged, group membership is less salient and to a certain extent even invisible or unnoticed, whereas for the less privileged, a sense of group membership is omnipresent. The authors focus on ethnic and racial minorities and women as they undertake important life tasks in contexts where their group membership is likely to give rise to threat and challenge.

THE AIMS OF THIS VOLUME

Contributors to this volume were given the task of considering how social identity matters in people’s efforts to navigate the accomplishment of important life tasks in a diverse society. The focus is on everyday life where identity becomes vivid and real. The volume is organized along four related themes:

1. Coping challenges that arise because of membership in social groups or participation in social roles
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2. Adaptive functions of identity
3. Contextual demands on identity and competing identities
4. The interplay between social identities and social relationships

Several chapters draw on multiple data sets from different research programs to address a particular question or to develop a theoretical integration. Many of the data sets are large and longitudinal and together span the period from adolescence through early adulthood. The chapters showcase the application of different and often new approaches to investigating the workings of identity. These include laboratory experiments, daily diaries, longitudinal and cross-sectional surveys, qualitative interviews, model testing, and grounded theory development. The integration of approaches and methods provides broad and deep insights into the nature of particular contexts and the relationship among contexts, identity enactments, and outcomes of interest. To conduct such integrated work in a single research program is virtually impossible, but the collaborative activities of the social identity research group is a model of how an interdisciplinary team can effectively share theories, data, and methods to make substantial inroads into documenting how social identity matters in daily life.

We now turn to a discussion of the four main themes addressed in the volume.

PART I: IDENTITY AS A SOURCE OF STRESS: CHALLENGES FROM MEMBERSHIP IN STIGMATIZED SOCIAL GROUPS

The two chapters in part I are concerned with how generally successful and engaged members of historically marginalized groups handle stigma-related stress in challenging educational contexts. Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck take as their starting point the well-documented phenomenon of stereotype threat (ST). They seek to explain why otherwise accomplished and capable black students and women can, under conditions of diagnostic test taking, score far below the range of performance predicted by other intellectual markers found in their academic portfolios. London et al. focus on these same accomplished and capable students as they negotiate the transition to a highly academically selective college. They investigate students’ perceived exposure to stigma-related stress, how they cope with such stress, and the effectiveness of the coping strategies they use. Other than to suggest that people of color and women report a generally positive transition to college, there was no evidence of persistent vulnerability of the type evident in the high-stakes testing situations where stereotype threat has been examined. Thus, although the London et al. study adds to the literature showing that many members of stigmatized groups are very adept at negotiating various forms of stigma-related stress, the stereotype threat literature shows that the protective shield-associated stigma management is not perfect. The important message from both chapters, however, is that individual differences in both coping tactics and beliefs are key moderators of the effects of stigma-related stress on academic performance, sense of belonging, and psychological well-being.
The critical contribution of chapter 2, by Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck, is to highlight how the impact of ST can be alleviated while also documenting the important and ubiquitous nature of the phenomenon. At a point in history when structural explanations for the race gap in educational achievement were being overshadowed by personal-psychological explanations, Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) introduced the concept of stereotype threat. Their goal was to explain how cues in situations where negative stereotypes about black achievement might trigger normative psychological defenses against threat, could then undermine performance. Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck’s review of the ST literature emphasizes that ST can be experienced by any individual who, because of membership in a social group, is “prone” to compare attributes of the group to attributes of other social groups, especially when a sense of “superiority” and “inferiority” is at stake. ST has been found not only among blacks in academic achievement but also in many performance domains and among white males and white women, Asian Americans, Latinos, the wealthy, and the working class. Evidence of ST effects in groups seldom associated with negative stereotypes demonstrates that every social group has a group image that under some conditions can be threatened. That ST effects are socially constructed rather than an inherent group vulnerability was recently demonstrated in a study of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Whereas first-generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants are impervious to ST effects, second-generation immigrants who grew up in the United States show the effect, thus resembling the African Americans of earlier studies (Deaux et al. forthcoming).

What psychological processes link being in an identity-threatening situation and underperformance? Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck posit that pinpointing the psychological processes underlying ST has been so difficult because a spectrum of individual difference factors may be operating, with some people being anxious, others stymied, and others being mildly depressed, in reaction to ST. They even speculate that for any ST episode, there may be a sequence of responses, and different emotions or cognitions may be recorded depending on whether the focus of research is on the onset, zenith, or climax of the ST reaction. They propose that individuals who view their self-worth as contingent on academic performance (Crocker and Wolfe 2001) and who also view their test performance as diagnostic of their ability (Dweck 1999) are particularly vulnerable to experiencing ST. The concepts and variables highlighted in their discussion lead to a certain degree of excitement that perhaps we are drawing closer to a clear view of the contents of the ST “black box.” Lawrence, Crocker, and Dweck also note that student beliefs about whether other people view intelligence as fixed or malleable may affect student test-taking performance and may indeed be a particularly powerful moderator of the stereotype threat effect.

In the chapter by London et al., attention shifts from the microdynamics of people’s adjustment in the important but narrow world of test taking to the broader identity adjustments and identity shifting that take place in daily life. The key contribution is a methodology for viewing and analyzing identities as they are experienced on a daily basis and for focusing on the relative impact of coping strategies in response to negative identity activation. In a twenty-one-day daily diary study, black, white, and Asian first-year college students were provided with a checklist of
identity options, including choices of both personal (personality and physical looks) and group (race, gender, religious, and sexual orientation) identities, and were asked to record the frequency with which various identity “categories” were activated while the subjects negotiated a broad range of situations, both positive and negative, typical of the transition to college. Across the three weeks the typical student attributed the most significant event of the day to a combination of various personal and collective identities. That is, on some days the most significant event was attributed to personality, on some days to physical appearance (especially attractiveness to a potential dating partner), and on some days to race or gender. However, members of historically devalued or excluded groups—racial and ethnic minorities and women—were more likely to attribute the most significant event of the day to the devalued identity. Thus, for members of traditionally disadvantaged groups, the daily negotiation of the transition to college was often experienced through the lens of their social group memberships, creating challenges to feelings of social inclusion and belonging with peers and professors within the university setting.

An important finding was that the outcome of negative events, whether attributed to one’s race or one’s personality, depended on how one coped with them. Self-silencing was linked with a lower sense of belonging and a more negative mood, whereas transforming the situation was linked with an increased sense of belonging and more positive mood. Interestingly, confronting the situation or person did not moderate the effect of the stressor. The diary approach highlights a way of examining the frequency with which personal and social identities are linked with the most important event of the day. A logical next step would be to examine the identity profile or configuration for each participant. It may be possible to discuss “stable” and “persistent” aspects of the self-concept not in terms of the frequency of employing identity categories one at a time but as a profile that links the person’s proclivities across identity domains, inclusive, perhaps, of points of intersectionality, where two or more identity categories are evoked simultaneously.

Last, London et al. report frequent use of the category of “personality,” or what Strauss and Cross (chapter 4) call “acting like oneself or ‘just being me.’” This finding is replicated in Strauss and Cross’s daily-diary study, and negotiating individuality also emerged in the qualitative data described in chapter 6, by Celina M. Chatman and Jacquelynne Eccles. When the primary focus is on “minority” identity adjustment, the importance of individuality can get lost. This finding is a reminder that there is no inherent tension between individuality and group belonging. In fact, being free to openly explore both the “I” and “we” aspects of one’s self-concept can perhaps be considered a basic requirement of an authentic multicultural environment.

In sum, the chapters in part I show that even the most accomplished students can feel vulnerable in the face of certain contextual challenges when their membership in a devalued category is activated. But they also identify generic coping resources—both global beliefs and specific tactics—that can diffuse potentially toxic and debilitating experiences. Thus, social identities matter both for how students’ experiences are shaped within academic settings and how they ultimately adapt in those settings.
PART II: HOW IDENTITIES FUNCTION TO AID THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF LIFE TASKS

In part II, the focus shifts from the challenging aspects of a societally devalued social identity to the adaptive functions of such an identity. That is, three chapters explore how aspects of social identity, specifically ethnic and racial identity, can assist in coping and in the accomplishment of life goals. Ethnic identity is depicted as an added resource for ethnic minority individuals and identity negotiation is conceived, in Strauss and Cross’s words, as more than “stigma management.” Indeed, ethnic identity is described as being formed and enacted in settings where experiences of marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination are normal, and includes strategies for getting along in the mainstream, for managing intragroup relations, and for protecting and expressing one’s individuality.

Together, the chapters provide an evidence-based portrait of the functionality of strong group attachment and affiliation, especially in the face of negative race-related experiences. Shelton et al., in chapter 5, draw on three distinct and rich research programs to develop a convincing argument that a strong positive group identity moderates the link between negative stigma-related stressors and distress and academic disengagement. The findings replicate across different age groups (adults and adolescents), different methods (daily-diary and survey-based measures), and different ethnic groups (Chinese American and African American). In their daily-diary study of black students at a predominantly white college, Strauss and Cross detail how racial identity can function to promote resilience in challenging environments. Using both quantitative and qualitative data from a large longitudinal study of students from the seventh to the eleventh grades, Chatman and Eccles also show how youths negotiate the subjective meaning of race and ethnicity in increasingly challenging contexts and how this impacts their behavioral and psychological adjustment.

The authors compellingly portray individuals as deliberate, flexible, competent, and capable of exercising agency as they draw differentially on components of their ethnic identity in response to contextual demands. For instance, Strauss and Cross find that bonding is more common in settings in which other blacks are present, whereas buffering and code switching are more common in situations where whites are present. Chatman and Eccles similarly find that some strategies are more likely than others to emerge when participants are in the minority or exposed to group stereotypes, and that there is a co-occurrence of particular identity strategies with particular identity functions.

The authors showcase innovative methodological approaches, which allow for sophisticated, transactional, and in-depth articulations of ethnic-identity processes and the ways they develop and shift across time and contexts. Both Strauss and Cross, and Chatman and Eccles use content-analytic approaches to organize text from in-depth interviews. This enables them to identify instances in which a strategy or tactic and a function or goal (Chatman and Eccles) or a function and a situation (Strauss and Cross) were jointly present in texts. Strauss and Cross and Tiffany Yip and Andrew Fuligni (2002), described in Shelton et al., used daily-diary methods to
assess within-person variability in ethnic feelings across contexts. Chatman and Eccles used cluster analysis to construct ethnic-identity profiles and show how they change over time. The idiographic approach to categorizing identity profiles that Chatman and Eccles used reveals how simultaneous variation in multiple aspects of identity are related to outcome profiles. For instance, the group that is socioculturally embedded is strong academically but doing less well psychosocially. The members of this group were highly connected with and proud of their ethnic group and viewed it as an important part of themselves. Yet they were also aware of the negative stereotypes attached to their group and of the prospect of discrimination. Chatman and Eccles suggest that expectations of being treated unfairly may undermine their commitment to behaving according to mainstream standards, a point that is echoed in chapter 10, by Susan M. Andersen, Geraldine Downey, and Tom Tyler, who posit that people voluntarily obey the rules of groups whose authority figures treat them in a respectful, unbiased and warm manner.

The chapters in part II are an excellent starting point for the difficult task of isolating the specific components of ethnic identity that moderate the stress of being a member of a racial or ethnic minority. In fact, the data from all three research programs described in Shelton et al. (chapter 5) converge in showing the benefits of viewing race as central to one’s self-definition for mental health and school engagement. The work of Robert Sellers et al. (1997), described in Shelton et al. (in this volume), also showed that viewing one’s group as an oppressed minority may protect black college students against mental health difficulties.

The chapters also begin to specify the mechanisms whereby ethnic identity has its salutary effects. Shelton and her colleagues suggest, for example, that individuals who view their group as an oppressed racial minority may have a wide repertoire of coping mechanisms for dealing with discrimination because discrimination is consistent with their worldview. But this viewpoint may entail a cost: genuine intergroup friendships. Further, those for whom race is central to self-definition may be better positioned to focus on the positive aspects of their racial group than those for whom race is less central. In addition to these sorts of mechanisms, strong ethnic identity may prompt ethnic-minority individuals to rely on members of their own group as a reference point for their self-appraisal. Blacks who are more strongly identified are also probably more fully embedded in a social network of other blacks who can support them in the face of discrimination.

Finally, the chapters show that identity processes and functions shift across context. Chatman and Eccles also show considerable change in identity profiles within individuals across time. The cluster analytic techniques mentioned above yielded the same six ethnic identity profiles in eighth- and eleventh-grade students. However, many students shifted from one profile to another, probably a reflection of transitions in school context over this time period. This malleability in identity profiles points to many interesting questions for future research. What aspects of school context account for identity shifts? Are some identity constellations more or less likely in schools that are diverse than those that are ethnically segregated? Does tracking within schools influence youths’ identity profiles? Addressing these questions require the type of in-depth focus on context seen in the two chapters in the next section.
PART III: CONTEXTUAL DEMANDS AND COMPETING IDENTITIES

In the chapters by Allen et al. and by Stewart and Dottolo, the emphasis shifts from unpacking the structure, content, and processes of identity to describing the contexts in which social identities are enacted. The basic premise is that contexts, whether neighborhoods or academic disciplines, high schools or universities, place demands on the kinds of identities that people enact and on how people think about themselves and their identities. Using markedly different methodologies, the two chapters document how contextual pressure to enact certain identities is socially, relationally, and emotionally more stressful for some people than others. In particular, these two chapters demonstrate that when contexts are incongruent with individuals’ important social identities, those identities may be challenged or threatened.

Allen et al. describe a large longitudinal survey study of ethnically and racially diverse high-school students living or being educated in either racially and ethnically congruent or incongruent contexts. In general, the results of their study indicated that those youths whose racial or ethnic group was the minority in their school or neighborhood context reported higher levels of depression than did youths who found their identities to be more congruent with the racial and ethnic composition of their schools and neighborhoods. Moreover, among black and white youths in racially and ethnically incongruent schools and neighborhoods, racial- and ethnic-group esteem served as a protective factor in the relation between racial and ethnic congruence and psychological adjustment. That is, when they were less ethnically and racially similar to their school and neighborhood peers, black and white youth with high ethnic and racial group esteem reported fewer depressive symptoms than those with lower ethnic or racial group esteem. For Latino youths, however, higher ethnic and racial group esteem was related to greater depressive symptoms when the neighborhood or school context was more ethnically or racially congruent.

In chapter 7, Allen et al. illustrate how the demographic makeup of developmental contexts can influence racial and ethnic identity, but also how these identities can both attenuate and exacerbate the negative effects of racial and ethnic incongruence on adolescents’ psychological adjustment. The data do not, however, offer information about the mediating factors in these relations. Chapter 8, by Stewart and Dottolo, complements the Allen et al. chapter in that Stewart and Dottolo examined the influence of context on strategies for coping with challenges to social identity. Their in-depth interviews with doctoral students showed that demands for divestiture of some valued aspects of the self were pervasive for those students with nontypical preexisting identities (particularly women, people of color, and sexual minorities). Specifically, in graduate programs students are socialized according to preexisting paradigms characteristic of both academia in general and their particular disciplines. Typically, these ways of thinking and being have been shaped and developed by white males, largely to the exclusion of women, people of color, and sexual minorities. The demand to conform to a scholar identity, as it were, were met by the students in the Stewart and Dottolo study with strategic resistance, including instrumental inaction; that is, apparent non-actions that help the self cope, indirect action, and collective action, but not with direct confrontation. Together, chapters 7 and 8
show how having a threatened identity or a social identity that is not supported within a given social context can create vulnerability to certain contextually created challenges. They also show how identity can help explain why people are not doing as poorly as one might expect, given the adverse circumstances.

The extent to which contexts are shaped by the distribution of power also comes across in both studies. That the white, Latino, and black youths in Allen et al.'s study were differently affected by context, and that the white youth, in particular, did not have a strongly articulated sense of racial or ethnic identity, suggests that being part of a group privileged in systems of political and economic power may have an impact on how contexts are engaged. That the graduate students of color and the white women in Stewart and Dottolo's study felt they were required to divest themselves of identities of color or femaleness suggests a system in which certain ways of knowing, doing, and believing are privileged to the point of invisibility to the actors who benefit from that privilege. Differences in power of different social identities therefore determine the possible identities one can enact to achieve success in these contexts. Whereas the power structures in these contexts do not preclude the possibility that opportunities to learn are also available, they do make it less likely that individuals alone will be able to change the contexts at work in their lives, as many of the graduate students in Stewart and Dottolo's study recognized.

PART IV: BRIDGING WORLDS: INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The focus of much of identity research has been on the ways in which a strong sense of identity or attachment to a social group enhances the possibilities for relationships. The authors of the chapters in this section take on the task of theorizing and empirically testing how relationships in turn shape people's sense of themselves and their social identities, such as their ability to form attachments to social groups. Indeed, social identities can be reciprocally influenced by many forms of relationships, including those of a hierarchical or lateral nature.

Andersen, Downey, and Tyler in chapter 10 seek to understand the influence of dyadic relationships on how individuals develop group identities and become engaged in their communities. The more specific goal is to identify the circumstances under which outsiders or members of historically subordinate groups come to develop a strong, positive superordinate identification. Toward this end, the authors draw on two theories of dyadic relationships—Andersen's theory of the relational self and Downey's theory of rejection sensitivity—and explore how they can profitably be applied to augment Tyler's group-value theory of social identity. Group-value theory posits that people identify with groups when treated in a respectful, fair, and unbiased way by group representatives. Once identified with a group, people use these dimensions of relational treatment to determine how the group views them and to regulate their self-esteem. The integrated theory provides a compelling framework for understanding the complex processes that link relationships and social identities, grounded in the significance of basic needs for a sense of belonging in dyadic relationships and in identity development. Evidence for the importance of trusting, respectful, and,
especially, warm dyadic relationships in the development of attachments to social
groups is shown across several studies using a wide range of methodologies. Especially
noteworthy is the point that when individuals meet, they react to each other in terms
of each person's personal and relational characteristics as well as their respective social-
category memberships.

McLaughlin-Volpe and her colleagues also show how dyadic relationships, specifi-
cally friendships with members of other ethnic and racial groups, influence the health
and well-being of young people of color. They emphasize the ways in which rela-
tionships shape the possibilities for connections to groups and institutions. Drawing
on data from three research programs, they find that young people of color who resist
the dominant cultural norm, which is to have relationships only with people in the
same ethnic or racial group, by having mixed ethnic and racial friendships are health-
tier, and are more likely to feel connected to primarily white universities than their
peers who do not make such choices. They find that such close cross-race friendships
are particularly helpful to students of color who are most doubtful about their place
in primarily white universities. Much like Andersen and her colleagues, they con-
clude that relationships are critical to understanding social identities, but that partic-
ular types of dyadic relationships, for example, cross-ethnic and cross-racial friend-
ships, have the potential to strengthen the attachments that young people form to
institutions. The finding critically underscores the point made in other chapters, that
it is essential to consider the possibilities and limits in relationships that are imposed
implicitly and explicitly by the institutional contexts in which they occur.

Institutions can structure possibilities for relationship building and, if positive
relationships cannot flourish, healthy development of attachments and identities
may be compromised. Compelling evidence of the importance of investigating the
impact of institutional climate on social relations is provided in research by Kerstin
Pahl, Melissa Greene, and Niobe Way (2000) on two urban schools. In a school with a
generally alienating climate where the administration implicitly discourages rela-
tionships (whether or not cross-ethnic or cross-racial), students segregated along eth-
nic lines and experienced difficulty connecting with schoolmates, whether within or
outside of their own ethnic or racial group. They were also uncomfortable discussing
race and identity. In a school where the administration has actively made decisions
intended to disrupt racial-ethnic segregation and to foster supportive connections
among students and teachers, students reported having close friendships that are pre-
dominantly but not exclusively with same-ethnic or same-race peers. The students also
openly and freely discuss feeling attached to their own ethnic or racial group. In sum,
the institutional context sets the tone for personal relationships.

Institutional contexts that are supportive of cross-ethnic and cross-racial relation-
ships can affect social identities not just through close friendships but also through
dyadic relationships with people who neither are close nor are considered "significant
others." Susan Harter (1996) proposed that adolescents believe that close friends are
supposed to like you, whereas classmates do not have the same responsibility—
therefore, the opinions of classmates often play a more important role in the ado-
lescents' self-assessment than do the opinions of close friends. A similar process
may be evident in the development of social identity. Whether an adolescent
becomes attached to a particular social group or social identity and if so, how attached
may depend on the quality of his and her relationships with peers in that social group who are not expected to completely accept him or her. If the quality of these "general" friendships or relationships is trusting and respectful, Andersen and her colleagues argue, the young person may become more attached to a particular social group than he or she would if only close friends treat them this way.

WHAT DO THE AUTHORS TELL US?

First, the authors make a compelling case that social identity matters for both good and for ill. Although membership in social groups and the associated identities can predispose people to stressors such as others' stereotype-based expectations, discrimination, and other forms of social disadvantage, they can also provide resources for coping with such circumstances. Understanding how membership in and identification with social groups can have these diametrical implications for people's lives requires a view of identity as dynamic and multidimensional.

Specifically, individuals are understood to have multiple and sometimes conflicting identities rather than a single, monolithic identity. Second, the authors also make a strong case that context determines whether and how identities matter. They do so by looking at immediate micro-settings within institutions, such as the nature of the instructions given to someone taking a test, and at the racial-ethnic composition of neighborhoods and in the everyday situations in which people live out much of their lives. Third, the authors suggest that identities are continually being formed and changed in the ongoing course of everyday life and especially in the course of social interactions and relationships. We learn about our social identities from the people with whom we interact. Fourth, by focusing on intragroup identity, the authors clearly show that people can identify with the same group in many different ways and that the ways in which people differ in this respect have implications for important outcomes. Finally, while showing how particular challenged identities matter, the chapters also highlight the integrative and individualistic nature of the self. The self of each individual combines personal, relational, and group identities. We need to remember this as we focus on explicating how social or group identity matters in daily life.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

In the course of telling us what is known about how social identity matters, the authors also tell us what remains unknown. First, although it is clear that contexts that challenge an important identity have negative consequences for achievement and well-being, far less is known about precisely when and why a given context is experienced or perceived as more or less challenging. A more detailed understanding of social context requires that research look beyond a demographic characterization of those who populate the context and begin to identify what specific environmental cues activate perceptions of threat (for examples, see chapters 3, 4, and 9).

Second, most of the authors assume that whereas the motivation to develop social identities may be inherent, the content and form of those identities are socially constructed and reflect individuals' socialization histories in their families, communities,
and societies. Thus, perhaps to a greater extent than other aspects of development, our social identities reflect our society’s views of the groups to which we belong. We need to develop a greater understanding of how identity-relevant experiences shape identity-relevant meaning systems as well as more general meaning systems. We need also to investigate more thoroughly how ethnic-identity profiles and identity negotiation strategies are shaped by different socializing forces in families and other institutions. We know from prior research that parents, community members, and others play a critical role in shaping youths’ ethnic identity. However, these studies have conceived of and measured ethnic identity as a stable trait rather than as a multidimensional, dynamic, and transactional phenomenon.

Third, the chapters have focused on identities associated with devalued- or underprivileged-group membership. What the authors have not done is clarify the ways in which members of the privileged majority interpret and enact membership in social groups. To some extent, the authors have indicated that majority-group members have a less elaborated sense of what their membership in social groups means for their sense of self and of the implications of that group membership in their everyday lives. The suggestion here is that members of majority groups are privileged not only in terms of the economic and social advantages afforded them but also in their not having to explicitly consider the need to negotiate their social identities in daily life. Because their identity negotiation is less overt, investigation of it may require more implicit techniques.

Fourth, although the authors acknowledge that people have multiple identities, they are examined one at a time or when in conflict. Thus, such questions as what it means to be a black woman from Brooklyn rather than a black man from Kentucky remain to be investigated. One implication of the various identities that people hold is that particular identities or identity combinations may become more or less salient at different developmental periods and in different institutional contexts. Understanding how people manage their multiple identities may require focusing on quite different questions about how identity matters than have been addressed in this volume.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

The most important policy-relevant contribution of this volume is its evidence-based message that identities matter in individuals’ navigation of a diverse society. The influence of identities on how people experience stressors, coping, belongingness, and achievement of goals in particular social contexts extends far beyond simple membership in a particular social category. Thus, for policies to be effective, they must take into consideration the different ways in which people interpret and enact their membership in social groups as well as the features of contexts that can affect these interpretations and enactments.

Often, contemporary approaches to diversity treat people’s membership in social groups as categorical, and membership in a given social group is viewed as sufficient explanation for differences in a variety of domains. For example, advertising companies market their products to specific social groups—say, African Americans, women, and white males—by drawing on language and symbols they assume to be
representative of those groups' subcultural orientations. Likewise, multicultural student services are emerging on college campuses nationwide that base their programming on what they perceive to be the typical needs of students from particular ethnic minority groups. Alternatively, a particularly pernicious practice is the use of racial or ethnic profiling to identify threats and criminals based on the salient demographic characteristics of the "typical offender." The research described in this volume documents the damaging effects of imposed social categorization on the individual, as well as the resulting strain on intergroup relations. In sum, the work reported in this volume shows that people's subjective representations of self in the context of their group memberships matter in many more ways than their mere categorization as members of those groups.

This volume also demonstrates that while membership in certain social groups can expose people to stressors such as negative stereotypes or discrimination, what is more important in such situations is the ways people cope with these stressors. This suggests the need for institutions to pay greater attention to building and nurturing the coping skills needed to navigate a diverse society. Schools are a particularly appropriate context for providing youths with identity-related resources that can serve to buffer the potentially damaging effects of stereotypes and discrimination based on group membership. School curricula might be revised to include explicit discussions of race and ethnicity and the history of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Such curricular inclusion may serve to equalize the experiences of majority- and minority-group members and may also serve to give majority-group members needed resources for navigating contexts and negotiating self in a rapidly changing and increasingly diverse and complex society.

Yet attention must also shift from how well the individual navigates—or copes with—the demands of new contexts and potentially competing identities to how he or she shapes the context to maximize learning and identity navigation. One way to change contexts is to increase the representation of diverse groups at all levels of institutions, and this is the goal of affirmative-action programs. These programs have successfully increased access to institutions that have historically excluded members of traditionally marginalized groups, and thus have provided previously inaccessible opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Yet, as several of the authors point out (see chapters 3, 5, 8, 9), institutions often fall short of providing the support that members of traditionally marginalized groups need in order to succeed. For example, the benefits of gaining admission to a top law or medical school might be significantly dampened by the threat experienced as a result of continued marginalization and exclusion within that context. Moreover, individuals most vulnerable to experiencing such threat may be least likely to enter institutions where, judging by the institution's past history, they expect to experience marginalization. The chapters of McLaughlin-Volpe, Mendoza-Denton, and Shelton, and Andersen, Downey, and Tyler in particular suggest that the institutional "welcome mat" needs to lead into a relational atmosphere where individuals are treated fairly, respectfully, and warmly, irrespective of their social identities, and where opportunities for developing friendships across racial, ethnic, and other lines of category demarcation are supported.

The authors suggest the futility of basing the creation of such an atmosphere on a color-blind philosophy. This philosophy underlay the media campaigns in the 1980s
and '90s that promoted the idea of the "cultural melting pot" in order to create a sense of unity and harmony among members of different social and cultural groups residing in the United States. More recently, such campaigns have been replaced with efforts to celebrate diversity without losing focus on the individual group identities as an important defining characteristic of the self. Models of society as a "mosaic" allow individuals to maintain their individual group identities while also identifying with the larger society. Research reported in this volume supports the notion that the connection with ethnic, racial, or other social identities is a central part of who we are and such connection can provide a valuable buffer against the negative outcomes associated with prejudice and discrimination. The aim of the melting-pot ideology was to promote unity. However, such efforts to de-emphasize difference may not be necessary if individuals are encouraged and supported in maintaining their positive social identities and are provided with a basis for relinquishing their concerns about not being accepted, comfortable, valued, and safe. The authors show that under such circumstances, people with diverse identities can establish a positive affiliation with the larger society in ways that increase true engagement with members of different groups.

REFERENCES


