

Identity, Social Status, and Emotion

Peter J. Burke, Department of Sociology, University of California, Riverside

Identity control theory was formed in the context of structural symbolic interaction which attends to the different positions in the social structure in which persons with given identities are embedded and to the impact of structural position on identity processes. One of the differences among social positions is the amount of resources the position controls and the amount of status accorded to the occupant. I examine the effects of social status on the emotional impacts of the lack of identity verification. Status, conceptualized as a symbolic indication of the control of resources, is hypothesized to have two effects. Status and resources help persons verify their identities, and at the same time, help to buffer the consequences of lack of verification. Data from the spousal identity of 300 newly married couples are examined and generally support these hypotheses. The implication of these findings for existing theory and future research are discussed.