

Identity Work Supporting the Coexistence of Ideologically Conflicting Identities

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Research Questions

- 1) How do people develop perceptions of ideological conflict between identities? (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008; Biddle, 1989; Settles, 2004)
- 2) What do they do to address or avoid conflict? (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006; Creed, DeJordy & Lok 2010)

Research Context

Extreme case (Eisenhardt, 1989) of work/family conflict:

- A faith tradition that emphasizes motherhood as women's "highest calling"
- Women strongly socialized, particularly during the period ~1975-2000, not to work outside the home
- Messages conveyed to girls via youth curriculum and role modeled via faith community

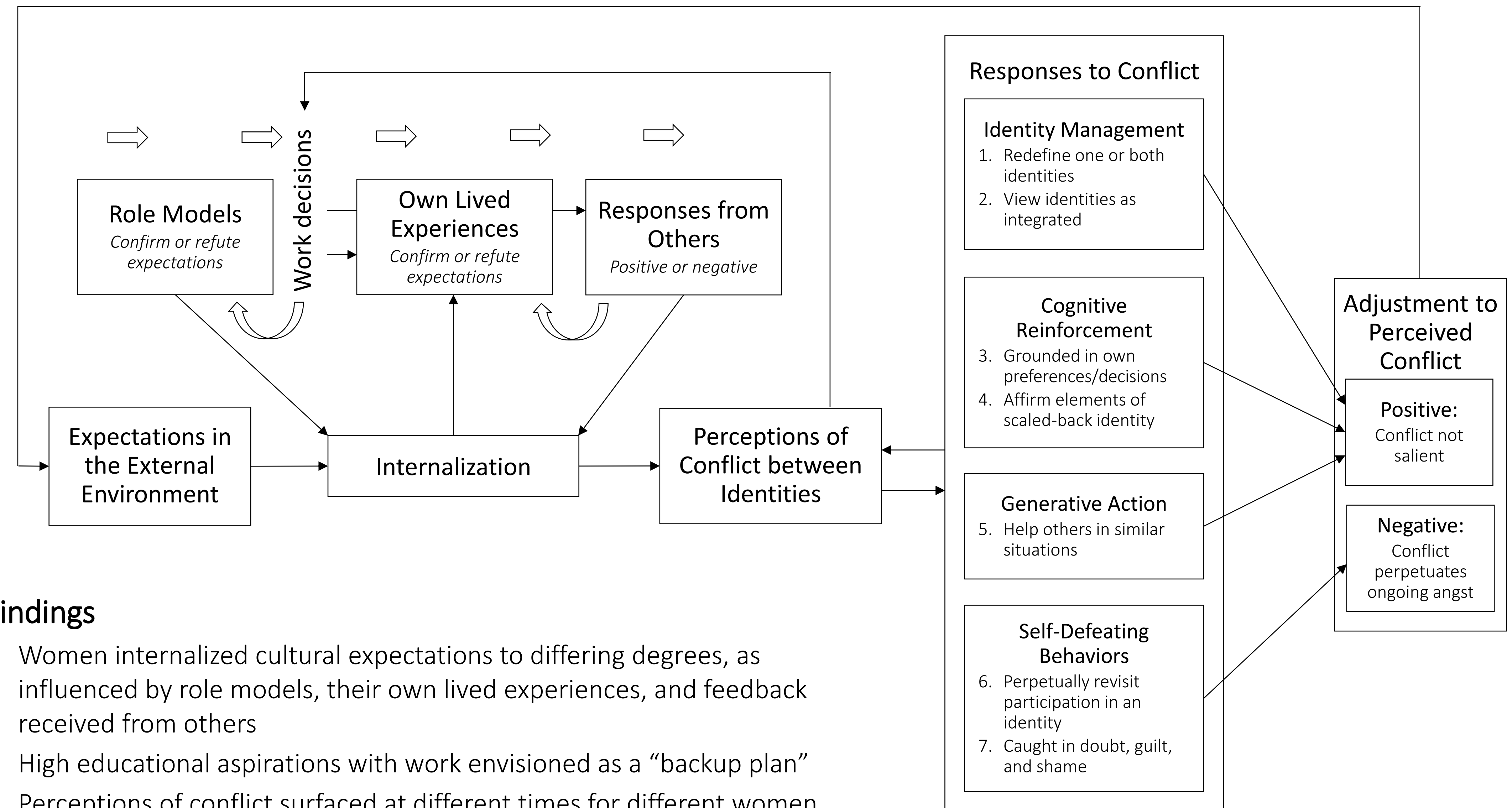
Participants (10)

- Married US mothers ages 30-55 with children ≤18 years
- Participated regularly in youth program as teens
- Remained active in faith tradition into adult years
- Work 20+ hours per week in professional jobs

Method

- 90-minute Skype interviews
- Audio recorded and transcribed
- Analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001)

A Model of Identity Work for Managing Ideological Identity Conflict



Findings

- Women internalized cultural expectations to differing degrees, as influenced by role models, their own lived experiences, and feedback received from others
- High educational aspirations with work envisioned as a "backup plan"
- Perceptions of conflict surfaced at different times for different women
- Women employ different strategies in response to identity conflict, which contribute to the nature of adjustment:
 - Positive adjustment: Identity management, cognitive reinforcement, and generative action
 - Negative adjustment: Self-defeating behaviors

Implications and Future Direction

- Coexistence of ideologically conflicting identities may be encouraged by positive role models, community building, and coaching
- What mechanisms lead to positive vs negative adjustment strategies?

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