

2 Decentering Histories of Identity

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The individual, as the basic social unit from which other social organizations and social relations form, is another system of ideas which needs to be understood as part of the West's cultural archive. Western philosophies and religions place the individual as the basic building block of society.

(Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 49)

What if we were to see modernity differently – as a dispersed experience based on exchange rather than transmission, happening everywhere simultaneously, even if to different degrees and with different effects?

(Geoffrey Batchen, 2014, p. 7)

The following three assumptions frame this chapter.* First, we fully affirm Linda Tuhiwai Smith's assertion from the above epigraph that identity is central to "the West's cultural archive." Here, identity is not a single entity or concept. Rather, it overlaps and intersects with related concepts such as self, the individual, subjectivity, and consciousness – to name a few of the many labels used when speaking about issues of identity. They in concert coalesce in a signification of a sense of who *we* are – *we* as individuals and as members of collectives; with a sense of agency and belonging; and an idea of temporal stability and change. Second, we hold that moving into an unfolding of how people historically have talked about identity, and over time have come to configure a sense of who they are, will help us better understand how people talk about and make sense of themselves in contemporary discourse. In tandem, and third, we argue that a contemporaneous and historical understanding will both serve the larger and strategic purpose of this chapter to *decenter* what we call modern European discourses around identity and related denominations – the way they emerged as sense-making strategies over the last five centuries in metropolitan Europe, resulting in what might be called a *new* European sense of self. In summary, the goal is to examine

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historiographies of modern European identity discourses for implied chronologies that feed a Eurocentric superiority vis-à-vis – and even at the expense of – others. To accomplish this goal, we will continuously try to scrutinize whose discourses made it into the history books of a modern Europe, and whose discourses were left on the margins. We further seek to follow Geoffrey Batchen's advice (above) in trying to show the emergence of European identity discourses as a product of new contact and exchange between people across boundaries – between people in emerging cities, across regions, nation-states, and different languages in Europe – and simultaneously globally between and across already existing cultures and societies.

We claim that the shape of a contemporary European understanding of identity is constituted through interactions across differences within an emergent Europe. Simultaneously, what may have originated in metropolitan Europe, and what is viewed as having slowly diffused from there outward into the periphery, is fundamentally shaped by what it diffused into. As such, the making of modern identity not only needs to be viewed as framed through experiences of regionally and transnationally coming up against Otherness, but also by and through global encounters *with* Otherness in newly *discovered* continents (cf. Alpert, 2019). Taking this perspective, colonialism and its settler-colonial varieties are as essential and foundational for emerging identity discourses in Europe as the local and particular conditions in European metropolises. We expect that considerations like these will motivate alternative ways of talking and thinking about identity and identity research. It is our hope to inspire students and scholars of identity to be able to more critically and confidently sort through the wide range of definitions of identity, self, and their corresponding terms in psychology, and examine this complex body of work by considering alternative strategies.

In this chapter, we interrogate identity from three angles. We start with an analysis of how an understanding of identity as a complex meaning system circulates in contemporary (English) language use. Next, we turn to how this meaning complex evolved within the history of what is widely understood as European modernity. In a third step, we address how this kind of European understanding made it into a particular understanding of the discipline of psychology in the United States and, from there, looped back into what we started with, i.e., our current contemporary (English) language use. In the hope of having sufficiently decentered dominant Eurocentric identity discourses and opened them to closer analytic scrutiny, we end our chapter with the question for alternatives.

To start with, and seemingly paradoxically, to historically scrutinize identity discourses in order to better understand contemporary discourses, we need to have an understanding of what we are scrutinizing, irrespective of how preliminary this understanding is. Here, rather than giving a clear-cut and expert definition of identity, we begin by charting a course for approaching identity in the complex and multifaceted interpretations of how it surfaces in

contemporary language use. In other words, we start by taking identity discourses out of the realms of philosophy, psychology, and neighboring academic disciplines and attempt to follow how the term *identity* is implemented in contemporary English by everyday people. This exercise, at this point rough and provisional, is meant to provide a general sense of the complexities and tentativeness involved when the term *identity* surfaces. In addition, it conceivably sensitizes hidden meanings and associations implied in ways it is used in daily practices rather than by academic experts.

In this first section then, we will consider the lexical item *identity* and neighboring and overlapping (and potentially competing) terms, such as *self*, *subject/subjectivity*, *individuality/authenticity*, and *consciousness/conscience*. To outline upfront what identity discourses in contemporary English language use have in common will help us crystallize a meaning complex that suggests that identity relies on a *sense of interiority* that can be accessed by way of *reflection*, serving as a compass for direction in three realms: (i) to navigate a sense of temporal stability and change, (ii) to integrate a sense of who we are and where we belong in relation to others, but also being able to differentiate from them, and (iii) to navigate a sense of agency – as on the one hand being subjected to seemingly uncontrollable forces, but on the other impacting on the world through our human actions and activities.

After this preliminary analysis of everyday discourse, we turn to an assessment of the historicity of this agglomerate. Here, we will focus on the specifics of European history and its historiographies, i.e., how specific historical predispositions and accidents have arguably resulted in what has been termed the New Age of modernity. This section builds on the assumption that underneath any historical changes leading to what has been termed *modernity* were (and still are) general possibilities for societal development. With modern discourses on identity at its center, the European emergence of modernity came about in parallel and partly intersecting with other discourses outside of Europe, though with these European discourses as some of the first. As such, this impacted contemporaneous and subsequent societal developments elsewhere, and ultimately globally. This attempt to write identity history requires evaluation and critique. More specifically, we will rely on the notion of contemporaneous identity discourses from our first section and examine the discursive conditions of its genesis across the last four or five centuries within the emerging European nation-states and the emergence of new forms of communication across them. Here, we will build on and add to a large body of historiographies that have attempted to establish genealogies of European modernity by investigating the products of literate elites, typically philosophers and fiction writers. To do this effectively, we would have preferred a historical determination of how discourses around the term identity had evolved in the talk of commoners, i.e., across the social boundaries of slaves, plebeians, peasants, aristocrats, bourgeois citizens, civilians, and members of the working class, as well as across gender and age lines – and this historically

across the centuries. Knowing well that such testimonies are sparse, we will nevertheless attempt to outline the historical emergence of a European, modern, common discourse around identity and bring in more than philosophical testimonies, scrutinizing the broader material with regard to its representation of, and relevance for, a common awareness across socially diverse strata and class differences.¹

In the third section, we will review how the newly emerging discipline of psychology adopted and transformed identity discourses as they were originally circulating around the middle of the nineteenth century in Europe. We will follow two strands of theorizing identity in psychology (experimental and psychoanalytical), and how they migrated from Europe to North America, with our focus on the second. Here, we attempt to document how the emergence of a private and self-controlled individuality (Elias, 1939) paved the way for a new (psycho)-analytic identity discourse that looped back from the emerging discipline of psychology into the unfolding of what is currently running under the header of a therapeutic culture/ethos (Illouz, 2008, 2012), proliferating in its clone of what is commonly referred to as the self-help industry.

In our final section, we will ask the key question of whether the way we lay out the historical changes in identity discourses can be imagined otherwise. More specifically, we broach the question of whether at any point in their European trajectories – or in partnership with other historically arising (Indigenous) identity discourses² – it may have been possible to arrive at different discourses that would have allowed alternative ways of defining and framing identity, potentially also resulting in alternative ways of investigating identity methodically. Although it is suggestive and relies more on asking questions than conclusive statements, we hope that this section provides an overarching orientation that readers can use as coordinates for approaching identity and identity research when reading handbook chapters – but also as a necessary springboard to pursuing their own line of identity research.

¹ Attempts along these lines have been made in the past – and from at least two kinds of perspectives: one coming from what Linda Tuhiwai Smith called “Western critiques of Western research . . . that enabled systems of self-critique” (1999, p. 164), of which Pelz (2016) presents an excellent starting point. The other presents itself in a more general project of *decolonizing methodologies* – as suggested by the title of Smith’s book (1999), to which we owe a good deal of our inspiration.

² Indigenous/Indigeneity, apart from its definitions under domestic and international laws, to us has three different connotations relevant for identity. In this chapter we will try to keep them separate and point to their differences in meaning when using these terms: (i) Indigeneity as a particular (historical and) local discourse; (ii) Indigeneity as local discourse that has its own Indigenous history, i.e., language and cultural tradition of myths, rituals, beliefs, and relational practices; (iii) Indigeneity as discourses that are marked by power differentials, and as such have the tendency to deprive people of their traditions and subject them to inhumane, unequal, and exclusionary treatment. We capitalize the terms Indigenous and Indigeneity throughout this chapter to declare our recognition and general alignment with the third definition.

From the very start, we need to point out two limitations we are facing. The first is that by fixating our ordinary language analysis on English, followed by a historical genealogy of identity within the territorial space of Europe, i.e., a Eurochronology, one automatically runs the risk of an endorsement of an ethnocentric European exceptionalism. This suggests that we must continuously reflect on and relativize any judgment or generalization that may point in this direction. The second limitation comprises the dilemma that our approach to historical change is prone to transporting certain ideologies into how we approach identity, interiority, and reflection and what we make of them. Consequently, before beginning our discussion, we need to emphasize the relevance of recognizing and reflecting on what we, as authors, bring to the analysis in light of our own historical and social situatedness. We acknowledge and reflect on our background as white, male, middle-class Germans. Each of these categories brings a certain baggage that conveys our obligation to consider the historical situatedness that impacts the conceptions put forward here. In particular, having been raised against the backdrop of racist histories that brought about the Holocaust and two World Wars, we acknowledge that our own backgrounds and historical situatedness impact our conceptions. We will thus simultaneously try to display our conceptual provisions of identity discourses that are grounded in contemporary (English) language use and their historiographies and open them up to how they could be otherwise. With this in mind, we do not attempt to sweep our positionality into a footnote but make it central to the attempt to decenter the project of European identity discourse development and open up possibilities for alternative conceptualizations of identity – alternatives that may help clear the ground for how to investigate identity in different forms and methodologies.

2.1 Contemporary Identity Discourses

Historiographies of the body (Ruberg, 2019), sexuality (Foucault, 1978), or emotions (Plamper, 2015; Rosenwein & Cristiani, 2018), as well as work that presents histories of self and identity (Barresi & Martin, 2011; Rose, 1989; Taylor, 1989), have become flourishing fields. And as exemplified by the entries in this handbook, the concept of identity is found across disciplines and fields. However, identity can also be considered a new concept. As James Fearon's (1999) and Philip Gleason's (1983) analyses of the everyday use of the term identity document in contemporary (American) English usage show, identity was only recently introduced into Western discussions, and here first as part of academic terminology – from where it seemed to have quickly spread into popular contemporary discourses. Fearon (1999) stated that this recent development goes back to Erik Erikson's theoretical claim that each person forms their own identity (Erikson, 1968). Thus, the question arises of how this relatively new, and culturally specific, concept can be utilized as a

guide for transcultural and transhistorical inquiry into how people, organizations, or institutions come into being and maintain (or change) a sense of who they are, i.e., their identities.

The way psychologists, sociologists, political theorists, and others have utilized this concept to theorize (and empirically investigate) individuals and collectives across time and societies constitutes a very diverse, if not confusing, spectrum. Norbert Elias's (1993) and Erik Erikson's (1958) respective works on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Martin Luther may serve as captivating examples for transhistorical and transcultural analyses of two individuals' personal identities. Investigations into peasants' identities during the "Great Peasants' War" (1524/5) (Blickle, 2006; Habermas, 1976) and Polish peasants around the turn of the twentieth century (Thomas & Znaniecki, 2018–2020) offer fascinating transcultural approaches to the identities of collectives. Simultaneously, a closer look at these investigations shows that the theoretical assumptions and analytic procedures guiding this kind of work differ considerably. In this handbook entry, we build on Fearon's (1999) original investigation of the common, everyday language use (cf. Austin, 1962; Searle, 1971; Wittgenstein, 1994) in which the term *identity* is embedded and put to use. Starting from more common usage, rather than pondering how identity has been configured in theoretical (and empirical) work by experts, may offer ways to disentangle what is notable about *identity* among competing terms such as *self*, *subjectivity*, and *individuality*. In the sections to come, we start with a brief outline of how identity is made use of in the English language, followed by other terms: (i) *self* (sense of self), (ii) *subjectivity*, (iii) *individuality* (and its modification of an *authentic individuality*), and (iv) *awareness* (alongside *consciousness* and *conscience*). The purpose of comparing these terms is to capture some differences in usage but simultaneously carve out how they work together by assuming specific types of *interiority* and *reflexivity*, from where more particular terms find their application in everyday English. We intend to capture the most common terms. However, this analysis could easily be extended to include *character*, *personality*, *independence*, *freedom*, and *autonomy*, to name a few – which all similarly intersect with identity, assuming a built-in and seemingly reflective organization of interiority. Confining our discussion to this limited set of terms and how it intersects with identity, we provide a foundation for the section to follow, consisting of how identity with a presumed internal nucleus could emerge historically and become a new subject for factual and empirical inquiry.

Approaching ordinary language terms as representatives of ideas or certain kinds of consciousness is not unproblematic. *Words* (including the minutiae of their phonological pronunciation), *terms*, *concepts*, *metaphors*, *ideas*, *narratives*, *discourses*, *backgrounds*, and even *ideologies* have been isolated and scrutinized as in one way or another reflecting a certain collective stance or affiliation of speakers. And arguments have been made for what actually is (and what is not) being analyzed when decontextualizing parts of speech and

using them to make assumptions about collective consciousnesses.³ In the following, although we cannot make these discourses explicit in the way they deserve, we appropriate the notion of discourses as units of analysis from where a certain kind of collective understanding can tentatively be assumed as given. As such, we aim to illuminate certain aspects of the lexical, pragmatic, and discursive usages of *identity* (and its neighboring terms) in everyday common use of American English.

2.1.1 Identity

Rooted in the Latin attribute *idem* (same), later nominalized as *identitas* (sameness), identity came to designate the particular temporal quality of constancy across time – denoting repeated recognitions of a person or entity to form the characteristics by which they become recognizable. In other words, aspects of temporal stability are taken to create a foundation for a singular entity’s recognizability, thereby constituting its identifiable features. This, in turn, makes it possible to differentiate it from (*vis-à-vis*) other entities. This essential kind of temporal semantic foundation is what makes two (or more) different objects identical, such as identical twins or two identical copies of a document. Fearon (1999, p. 36) goes on to distill two further denominators out of the everyday ways identity is put to use in contemporary US English: (i) as something “that a person takes pride in, or views as, unchangeable but socially consequential,” and (ii) thereby providing particular social categories. He argues that these categories are “defined by membership rules and allegedly characteristic attributes or expected behaviors” (*ibid.*). Thus, to judge from a first and preliminary examination of the etymological roots and the common, everyday use of the term, *identity* connotes (personal) characteristics that are embraced as stemming from a sense of temporal continuity (*i.e.*, a particular contour of temporal change), and that those characteristics distinguish this person or entity from (*vis-à-vis*) other entities in terms of generalizable membership categories. We will return to these two characterizations of identity (change and distinguishability) after considering other related terms.

2.1.2 Self

Self, in English, is used to place emphasis on the person referred to – as in “I myself am responsible,” emphasizing the subject *I*. In addition, if used as a reflexive pronominal form to mark the syntactic object, English splits the agentive subject (*e.g.*, *I* or *we* as subject), and marks the receiving or

³ Reflecting on our own engagement in these debates (*cf.* Bamberg, 1997; Bamberg & Lindenberger, 1984; Bamberg & Wipff, 2020; Wierzbicka, 1997), we acknowledge that these issues basically remain unresolved.

undergoing object by a case (*me*), to which *-self* (*myself*) needs to be added – as in “I hurt myself” or plural, “they hurt themselves.” English does not allow dropping the post-fix “*I hurt me” or “*they hurt them.” Thus, *-self*, initially, is not nominalized. Rather, self designates the recipient/target of an action that originated from the same entity/person. *Self*, as a nominalized entity, captures this reflective concession and yields it to the subject who reflects on *their self*. To clarify: the self, to *be* a self, requires an agentive *I* that looks at and reflects on itself, as if looking through a looking glass (cf. Carroll, 1871; Cooley, 1902) and taking this perspective for the purpose of *making sense* of oneself – or, to gain *a sense of self*. It is this self-reflective aspect that makes it possible (in English) to form compounds such as self-awareness, self-control, and the like.⁴ Turning oneself into the object of reflection, i.e., subjecting self to introspection (*subjectifying self*), opens the person to interrogation, critique, and judgment – potentially even in ways that enable suspending judgment (cf. Butler, 2003, 2005). Nominalizing the self – in conjunction with turning the self into its object – implicates the person as conceivably *having* (owning) a self, so that it can actually be inspected and interrogated as part of a person’s interiority. This split of the self into a subject and a simultaneous object position provides English-speakers with the option of detaching the self as agent from (vis-à-vis) the self as object/undergoer, as, for instance, in denials of responsibility. *Allowing oneself to engage* in questionable activities (cf. John Edwards, 2008; Edison Chen, 2010 – both quoted and analyzed in Bamberg 2010 and 2020, respectively), or *convincing oneself* that “normal rules don’t apply” (to quote Tiger Woods from his press conference, February 09, 2010) are discursive devices – typically utilized in apology accounts – that illustrate this kind of split of the same person into an agentive *allower* and a subjected *allowee*. In short, it seems that the original emphasis of a person’s agency, when combined with a self-reflective underpinning, has filtered into William James’s (1890/2007) *I-me* distinction and G. H. Mead’s (Miller, 1982) subsequent elaboration of a *me* as the object of an *I*, and a presumed *me/self* as the socialized object that is acquired through language in interaction. Below, we will revisit how this distinction is further split when discussing Sigmund Freud’s use of ego, id, and superego.

2.1.3 Subjectivity

There are two ways in which the terms subject and subjectivity are put to use in English: the first appears as a concept of the person, who (i) is agentive in

⁴ Last updated on February 12, 2020, Wiktionary (2020) (Category: English words prefixed with *self-*) lists 387 English words that are prefixed with *self-*, including twenty that figure heavily in psychology texts: self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-concept, self-perception, self-schema, self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-appraisal, self-evaluation, self-assessment, self-categorization, self-image, self-control, self-realization, self-worth, self-love, self-respect, self-defense, self-verification, self-preservation.

the world (e.g., the *subject-as-agent* = with a person-to-world direction of fit as in *Leslie climbed the mountain*) and (ii) is being subjected to forces seemingly out of control of the self (*subjected-as-undergoer/experiencer* = with a world-to-person direction of fit as in *Leslie was attacked*).⁵ Both directions of fit bring to the fore a focus on *agency* but disregard the dimension of temporal continuity and recognizability (cf. *identity*) as well as the reflective focus of an I → self or self → other differentiation (cf. self/sense of self). A second and partly overlapping meaning of the terms subject and subjectivity unfolds in their semantic contrast to object and objectivity. As such, subjectivity calls up a personal, individualized, and experiential way of giving meaning to experience, in contrast to depersonalized, objective, *true* ways of sense-making. Within this subjectivity–objectivity contrast, subjectivity and *the subject* configure aspects that not only differentiate the person from others but heighten their potential uniqueness – the utmost differentiation within the self–other dimension, which, as we will argue below, is even more heightened when we turn to individuality and authenticity.

The two connotations of subjectivity, (i) providing the subject with agency and (ii) marking experiential uniqueness, do not square with each other and are potentially confusing. For our purpose here, and to clear some ground for the historicity of identity, it may suffice to be cognizant that the two rather different connotations of subject/subjectivity both heavily rely on the concept of interiority, i.e., recognizing one’s capacity for agency and uniqueness implies having choices that go along with appropriations of freedom, rights, ownership, duties, and liabilities (cf. Bamberg, 2021; Harré, 2015). More interestingly, no other English term of the identity-self-subjectivity spectrum orients as much and as clearly with a focus on agency as bidirectional, i.e., from person to world *and* from world to person. As explained in more detail elsewhere (Bamberg, 2021), this bidirectionality lends itself to following up empirically by the use of positioning theory and positioning analysis (see also the chapters by Bertau; Calder-Dawe & Martinussen; Giaxoglou & Georgakopoulou; Locke & Montague; Riley, Robson, & Evans; Salgado & Cunha; Wilkes & Speer, all this volume).

2.1.4 Individuality and Authenticity

The term *individual* refers to a single member that stands out as separate from other members of the same species or category. When mapped onto a singular person or entity, its derivative *individuality* calls up aspects of the reflective self, and an experiential subjectivity touched on in the previous sections. It also presupposes a sense of a certain temporal continuity and, according to

⁵ The two opposing kinds of *directions of fit* capture particularly well the person at the two opposing ends of a direction of action: the person as originator of an action (as subject) versus the person as target (object) of others’ (including nature’s) actions.

Fearon (1999), even pride, that emerged in our discussion of the defining characteristics of identity. Individuality, then, denotes a self-reflective *I* who intends to grasp reality, makes decisions, and acts accordingly; an individual who emphatically and determinedly decides to stand out as different – typically vis-à-vis the norms of collective others.⁶ To act and to be authentic implies having *original* authorship over one's actions and requires an assessment of, and alignment with, one's presumed inner feelings and attitudes. This is typically pitted against that which is considered to confine externally and to impose on the self in the form of (social) conventions and protocol. To *be* individual and *act* authentically, thus seems to necessitate reliance on a most inner core, often considered to be the *true* self, that serves as a guidepost for acting within a certain continuity and recognizability of both standing out and fitting in with regard to intimate and less intimate social relations. Individuality and authenticity as relatives of identity, self, and subject/subjectivity sharpen two essential ingredients of the mix we intimated earlier, namely an unabatedly positive sense of the person's interiority as a morally worthy guide, and the self as an isolated but potentially thoroughly agentic subject – foreshadowing a concept of a conscience as its interior compass.

2.1.5 Aware(ness), Conscious(ness), Conscientious, Conscience

In common English, *being aware* typically means being aware of something; this presupposes being *awake*, i.e., not asleep or unconscious. Furthermore, it requires an agency (typically in the form of a self or a mind) that directs and orchestrates the senses toward a particular object or locus of attention. Although *conscious* (adjective), *conscientious* (adjective), and *conscience* (noun) are derivatives of the same Greek verb *to know*, they differ in what they connote: While *being aware* suggests at the very least some minimal form of reflection, *consciousness* connotes a higher state of awareness – one that regulates, controls, and even, to a degree, integrates the direction of senses. *Conscientious* and *conscience* signify an even higher degree of self-reflection – one that inserts a moral orientation and can differentiate right from wrong. As such, a person's conscience can gain its own agency and function as an inner voice – one that, when consulted, can tell the person *the right thing* to do. Interestingly, this can range from a seemingly shallow level of self-reflective awareness to a deep and value-laden moral consciousness (represented in a person's conscience) that is able to contrast one's own individualistic actions based on one's egotistical urges and desires vis-à-vis a sense of social responsibility, and potentially even altruism. Grounded in *knowledge*, the guidepost in the form of individuals' conscience is ultimately rational, i.e., it is ultimately open to reasoning discourse about what is right and what is wrong; and as

⁶ We purposely neglect that individuality, the characteristic of *standing out*, can of course also be assigned by others – without having it claimed for themselves by *the individual*.

such, this kind of moral reasoning contributes in an important way to a sort of *moral compass* that is central to how identity is configured in common English.

2.1.6 Returning to Identity

To clarify, working through the ways identity and the intersecting discourses about self, subjectivity, individuality/authenticity, and consciousness compare and contrast in contemporary English usage, where and how they are situated and also overlap, but also accentuating slightly different shades of meaning, was not intended to result in clear-cut definitions. Instead, in working through terms that relate to and are often used as synonyms or proxies for identity, we aimed to indicate that we are entering a complex and nuanced territory. This, nevertheless, can provide guidelines that allow a closer look, in the next section, at how this rather complex conception of identity discourses came into being over time. To serve this purpose, we would like to distill five principles that have crystallized in our discussion thus far:

- (1) Identity as the site of the management of temporal change (stability, continuity, and also discontinuity) in order to provide recognizable characteristics that are maintainable (and changeable) across time.
- (2) Identity as the site where these characteristics are managed to demarcate differences (and sameness) between self and others – their belonging and separateness.
- (3) Identity as the site where the self seems to be able to agentively manage these characteristics (with a person-to-world direction of fit), in spite of being subjected to forces that appear to be out of direct control (a world-to-person direction of fit).
- (4) Identity as the site for a self-reflective rationality, i.e., where it is possible to (critically) interrogate and manage (1)–(3) in a coordinated fashion (cf. Bertau, this volume).
- (5) The site of identity as located inside, i.e., within the interiority of a self; where it seems to be given the status of an authentic command center – for navigating one’s own actions and activities; and this command center is also assumed to provide a compass for what is held to be right and wrong.

To summarize and condense the relationship between these five principles, when speaking of identity, modern English conveys a narrative of the following kind. First, there is something like an interior central navigation bridge to a person’s self. From this command center, three kinds of decision territories are navigated: (i) temporal stability and change; (ii) how to blend in and differentiate from others (e.g., other people, animals, nature); (iii) how to engage as agentive subject or as recipient, i.e., subjected to forces in the world (for further discussion of these three principles, see Widdicombe & Marinho, this volume). Finally, and accordingly, this narrative ends with the assumption that this internal command bridge is accessible by and to the self – using (self-)

reflective means; and, that if these reflective means are employed rationally, we may get it, i.e., identity, right. The next step in refining our understanding of this identity narrative and its kinds of concomitant identity discourses involves examining the sociogenesis of this kind of identity narrative.

2.2 A European History of Identity Discourses

The attempt to assemble a historiography of becoming self-reflective and, in this process, establishing an internal navigation bridge from where to steer oneself in terms of the three identity territories suggested above, strongly resembles a project that has been attempted many times before. It is the project of laying out the contributing factors that arguably resulted in *the history of modernity*. And we will sketch this project below from two angles, though intending to open it to alternative points of departure. First, we review the material changes that occurred across a particular territory (metropolitan Europe) over several centuries. In a second step, we illuminate the history of discursive changes that went alongside these changes. However, we feel the need first to discuss the limitations and problems of this attempt, because this project itself can be viewed as grounded in modern assumptions from where there may be no return, i.e., from where conceptions of alternative histories may be difficult to excavate, and from where cultural traditions that formed alongside the unfolding project of European modernity were pushed aside by elites who claimed those other traditions to be more primitive and less legitimate projects. To avoid this pitfall, we will start from the assumption that a presentation of the unfolding history of modern European identity discourses is precisely the sociogenesis of conditions that enabled a certain Indigenous, local consciousness – one that is best characterized in terms of a particular type, namely as *European* modernity. This historical unfolding we view as running parallel with *other modernities*. We shall return to integrating European modernity into the more global construct of Indigenous historiographies after we sketch the changes that took place within European traditions. This will help pave the way in the next section of this chapter to depict how identity-theoretical assumptions in the discipline of psychology could emerge in the particular academic constellations of a socio-historical (and political) context of teaching, learning, and research – first in Europe, and then diffusing outward into North American identity discourses.

2.2.1 Problems with Modern Projects of Identity Histories

First, the claim that identity/self or subjectivity/consciousness and conscience (as well as constructs like mind, emotions, agency, character, and personality) are subject to historical changes and large-scale cultural diversity may be hard to swallow. For instance, psychology students we teach are baffled (though

this may be due to teaching at small liberal institutions in the US): Aren't these (identity, subjectivity, consciousness) human dispositions that are universally shared – and definitive of what makes us humans (in contrast to other life forms)? Furthermore, aren't what ontogenetically unfolds across the life course (and across different societies) in regard to these dispositions simply individual or cultural differences – but all grounded in the center of human sense-making, i.e., in a deep and internalized sense of who we are as humans? While this argument by no means only reflects students' and laypeople's folk psychologies, this way of conceptualizing identity is also deeply woven into experts' theories, as documented in traditional handbooks on the topic of identity (e.g., Barresi & Martin, 2011; McLean & Syed, 2015; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). More pertinently, it shows how deeply the concepts of interiority and reflection are already woven into a common European and US American consciousness, as alluded to in our opening quotation from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, leaving little room to take a critical and historical look at them.

In addition, there are further issues specific to the writing of a history of identities, and particularly with drafting a European identity project. In this chapter, we shall occasionally touch on them. First, whose histories are incorporated (i.e., who are *the natives* in a European sociogenesis), and what are these histories supposed to accomplish? Second, what counts as evidence for the moments and events that are picked out and arranged into a plot that is assumed to feed the emergence of what can conceivably be considered the current state of (modern) identity discourses? And third, whose values are written into this way of doing historiography? Alongside these questions (which we will follow up briefly in the next paragraphs) inextricably travel assumptions about the good of any history-writing – ranging from conservatively justifying the status quo to drafting progressionist goals for a better future. This final question will be taken up in our concluding summary in this section and later in our opening for potential alternatives.

First and foremost, historiographies that span centuries typically feature conceptual changes in elites or the ruling classes, and their analyses at best offer insight into how the discourses of formerly underprivileged populations changed in the process of overthrowing old and gaining access to new power relations. Our sketch of European modernity discourses will start from there as well. However, recognizing that we know little, for instance, of the *state of self-awareness* of women and slaves, including foreigners, in the slave societies of Athens and Rome, or to what degree they were credited within the ruling male ideology, and whether they credited themselves, with a personal consciousness, a sense of self or subjectivity, we face an insurmountable conundrum. To give another example: We know equally little about the life of peasants in the medieval "Dark Ages," until European peasants launched a number of collective revolts against the nobles and landlords (1381 in England, 1431/1467 in Galicia, and 1524/25 in Germany), after which

peasants again seemed to have disappeared from documenting a shared and conscious interest in articulating their experiences of subjugation. In contrast to the slave revolts in Rome, of interest for the peasants' demands for rights and freedom was their reported invocation of divine laws,⁷ mirroring aspects of the religious liberation of the Reformation that also enabled nobilities to begin to exert their independence from the fetters of the Catholic Church. This interest in the identities of oppressed and marginalized individuals and collectives emerged only sporadically, such as in the wake of activist women's groups in the early twentieth century, and more recently in a worldwide outcry against the visible persistence of colonialism and systemic racism – and here particularly in the face of contradictions to the liberal promise as apparently anchored in most constitutions of *modern* nation-states.

Second, when it comes to what historiographers can rely on in terms of testimonies that bespeak the subjectivity and identity discourses of people in previous centuries, assuming we had access to verbal conversations – or, at the very least, more writings – of, for instance, women and slaves in Athens or Rome, and of peasants in medieval times, or of members of the working class during the Industrial Revolution,⁸ we would be able to analyze those records in light of suggestions made in the chapters of this volume (and elsewhere). Instead, the data that are available and typically made use of are writings of literate, privileged men, philosophers and theologians, joined later by male (and increasingly female) novelists, who in their writings had started thematizing issues of reflection and interiority – either as existential issues of being human, in the face of God – or, later on, as internal struggles in fictional characters. However, apart from, and in addition to, theological, philosophical, and literary testimonies, attestations date back to Hammurabi's legal code from Mesopotamia and early Egyptian dynasties that lay out and define the duties of (government) officials. These codifications of behaviors resemble the codes and restrictions of behaviors laid out in the writings of Confucius (551–479 BCE), and much later in the form of the courtesy books by Baldassare Castiglione (1528/1959) and Erasmus van Rotterdam (1530/1974). These works were later reinvestigated, starting with the groundbreaking work by Norbert Elias (1939), as reflecting aspects of the developing psychological changes in the conceptions of European upper- and, later on, increasingly middle-class identities, which in sociological research over the last fifty years also provided a look into the probable social causes of such psychological changes. In our sketch of the history of European modernity discourses, we start with a brief historical summary of socio-political and

⁷ As documented in the writings of Thomas Müntzer (1988), a theologian leader of the peasant uprising.

⁸ Notable exceptions are James Myles's fictional autobiography of *Frank Forrest*, which first appeared in ten chapters of a weekly newspaper between January 3 and March 7, 1850; and recent editions of *Memoirs of Victorian Working-Class Women* by Florence S. Boos (2017).

economic changes, followed by the discursive changes resulting in what we call a *new* consciousness.

Third, we consider any sketch of the emergence of European modernity bound to comprise a value stance that, in one way or another, is arguably, and simultaneously, the result of this same emergence. For once, as Homi K. Bhabha (1986) explicates concisely, “there is no master narrative or realist perspective that provides a background of social and historical facts against which emerge the problems of the individual and collective psyche” (p. xiii). Besides, reducing European modernity somewhat, and taking *liberté, égalité, fraternité* as the core values of its modern consciousness, it can be argued that, as abstract and ideal as these values are, they were only secured over a history of struggles and reforms against, and emancipated from, the ruling classes that existed (and kept existing) in the form of aristocracies, nobles, courts, and the Church. They mirror values at the hearts of other liberation movements, such as feminist, anti-slavery, and anti-colonial action orientations. However, maintaining our previous commitment to a critical lens, this realization requires an even more in-depth consideration of the inhumane and exclusionary consequences of modern Eurocentric (and, particularly later on, US American) exceptionalism. This resulted in new forms of patriarchy and slavery, colonialism, and the global expansion of capitalism, with an increase or, at the very least, a shift in inequality and injustice in their wake. To conclude, we see it as our primary task to bracket temporarily our own deep-seated values of <personal> freedom, <personal> autonomy, democracy, liberty for all, the right to vote, etc. – with the ultimate aim of opening our historiography to alternative views; and to avoid the dangers of repeating and naturalizing “the order of Western historicism” (Bhabha, 1986, p. xi).

2.2.2 The European Identity Project as a History of Material and Socio-Political Conditions

Enlightenment (rational) and Romanticism (emotional) debates certainly provided important impulses for the identity concept as it plays out in academic debates and everyday life today. Yet, the traditional study of how Jean-Jacques Rousseau influenced Immanuel Kant, for example, tells us little about how identity played out *on the ground* and how the self-concept of the everyday person changed during the settle time (Koselleck, 2004). As we mentioned before, there is obviously no way to go back and interview peasants, bondsmen, industry workers, and the like. Such material simply cannot be acquired. However, there is much concrete material about tremendous socio-political changes in Europe between 1750 and 1850, and even further into the early twentieth century, with strong influences on the concepts of identity and self that we can draw on. These changes played out in the arenas of science, new forms of production and global trade, and the newly emerging public sphere.

With the scientific revolution (from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century), a new generation of thinkers interested in the newly emerging natural sciences – the so-called scientific materialists – began to dominate intellectual discourses. Instead of philosophical speculations about human autonomy (Kant), the corrupting effect of society on the individual (Rousseau), the immortality of the soul (Hume), and the relation of the self to God (Descartes), an ontological leveling occurred. With the rise of the empirical sciences, humans became conceptualized as part of nature in the same way as plants and animals and thus as following the same laws. Forces previously separable by kind were now seen as similar. An energetic model of input and output and measurable growth emerged first in physics, and later in the economy and the human sciences. The number of academic journals increased during the settle time from a mere handful in central Europe to several hundred by the 1850s (Mabe, 2003). Ludwig Büchner, one of the first successful authors of popular science books, quotes in his 1855 bestseller *Kraft und Stoff* (Force and Matter) famous intellectuals of his time, such as the German pathologist Rudolf Virchow and the Italian neurologist Carlo Matteucci, and praises their success and advanced understanding of the human body as a complex mechanical system regulated by chemical reactions and energy flow. Hermann von Helmholtz, in 1847, presented a version of the first law of thermodynamics at the Physical Society of Berlin (Helmholtz, 1889). This law insists that energy is at a constant level in the universe and is neither created nor destroyed; it merely changes form. The conserved energy of which nature is composed operates in a transcendental though not a metaphysical way, and serves as the basis of all manifestations of both matter and force.

This scientific revolution went hand in hand with advanced technological changes during the First and Second Industrial Revolutions. From roughly 1760 to 1820, the first period was characterized by mechanization, population growth, urbanization, and a steady rise in average income and living standards, all primarily driven by the textile industry in Great Britain. Before the Industrial Revolution, the gross domestic product per capita in Europe had been mainly stable. The newly emerging industries, however, initiated a capitalist economy that focused on constant expansion and growth. Notably, Great Britain formed a global trading empire and inaugurated an intensification of colonization. The Second Industrial Revolution (1870 until the outbreak of World War I) amplified these processes with the development of production lines, standardization, and electric power, eventually resulting in modern consumer capitalism. This newfound power through mass production also changed how human beings, as the motor (Rabinbach, 1990) of this process, were regarded. Medieval Christian dogma considered idleness as a sin, a failure of character (Wenzel, 1960). By contrast, the new energetic model allowed for speculations about human nature in terms of ability, that is, usability, employability, and controllability of (other) human beings in the interest of production, progress, and profit.

The new capitalist order redistributed wealth and generated further distinctions between the state and the social polity that created its own sphere. James Donald (1996) characterizes the new citizen's consciousness in terms of a "citizenship that demands not absolute loyalty and obedience to the monarch (subjection) but a new capacity for self-determined agency (subjectification) and so new forms of intersubjective and intrasubjective relationships" (p. 178). Jürgen Habermas describes these changes in *The structural transformation of the public sphere* (1989). He claims that with the end of feudal societies, a distinction between the private and public emerged and that, within this distinction, the private allowed for a space of critique and self-reflection. International trade and the processes of industrialization and democratization in the emerging European nation-states went hand in hand with an increased need for (self-)critical debates to exchange economic, scientific, and cultural knowledge and form public opinion. These debates mostly took place in newly emerging coffee and tea houses and among the emerging bourgeoisie. The influx of tea, particularly in Britain, drastically reduced alcohol consumption, one of the pressing social issues of the time (Sournia, 1990) – and thus allowed for more (rational) debate. Improvements in printing press technology likewise allowed for more conversation and debate in written form and rising educational levels. God and the Churches became less influential; instead of an *annus domini*, an ever-repeating year of God, development toward a better life with more income, more available products, more education and knowledge, increased communication, and heightened democratic participation became desirable and reachable for an increased number of people. Freud's psychoanalysis rests on this energetic understanding of the self as split and the need for self-control as much as seemingly rational approaches to self-regulation. The self is drastically reoriented toward a developmental trajectory fixed on what is to come in the future. In the words of Eva Illouz (2012), new forms of uncertainties emerged, where "the shaping of the modern individual was at one and the same time emotional *and* economic, romantic *and* rational" (p. 9, our emphasis), where the private sphere and the newly gained domain of interiority could become "a space for ourselves" (ibid.) – a shelter for the cultivation of an authentic self, to which only the I had (privileged) access for a retreat into myself.

This new, mechanistic, energetic model of a human being that turns inward to understand themselves and outward to offer (self-)critique, self-control, and self-awareness consists of a regulation of an interior energy flow to maximize productivity and minimize unproductive expenditure. It also depends on continuous development in the accumulation of ability and knowledge within ever-increasing social networks of the *other*. The formation of these social networks, especially within and across the boundaries of principalities and emerging nation-states, is best described in terms of developmental processes with an integrative and simultaneously differentiating function (cf. Werner, 1980/1948). On the one hand, meeting, connecting, and trading with others

who do not belong to the same network community enforced the recognition of differences – differences in appearance, languages spoken, or in interaction rituals and communicative behavior. On the other, this push toward differentiation comes with the necessity of communicating across these differences – and as such an opening-up to, if not embracing of, commonalities and sameness.⁹ Thus, the emerging sense of a European identity – across national, regional, local, and individual boundaries – presupposes some form of acknowledgment of an inevitable interdependency. This acknowledgment of an interdependency within and between communicative networks is an essential predisposition for the constitution of regional dialects and national languages, and simultaneously for a national and a *new* European consciousness – and, as we will argue below, also for the potential vision of a *new* global identity.

2.2.3 The European Project as a History of Identity Discourses

A radical transformation to the *new* consciousness of modern times is commonly held to have taken place between medieval times (also called the *Middle Ages*, which were assumed to have started under the problematic label *Dark Ages*) and modernity (the *Enlightenment*). When exactly this radical change took place and what its precursors are thought to be is subject to theoretical and empirical debate; we will touch only briefly on these debates below. However, the time frame from 1750 to 1850 is said to constitute the settle time for this rather sizable transformative project to resolve (cf. Koselleck, 2004). As noted above, the testimonies previous historiographers of a modern European identity have relied on to construct their theories are predominantly those from elites, i.e., typically men who had been educated within dominant discourses within the Church, and increasingly at the courts of emerging European nobilities. Their access to languages such as Latin and Greek, as well as their growing abilities to read, write, and interpret texts available to them, distinguish these elites from the common people, including women, peasants, and members of the emerging working class. In addition, being situated within the discourses of royals/nobilities (and within the hierarchy of the Church) implies the cultural expectation of differentiating and buffering dominant hegemonic discourses from newly emerging counternarratives of the lower castes and classes such as peasants and wage earners, as well as those of women. Thus, the documents and testimonies that are typically used to outline a history of European modernity have to be read against the grain of their tendency to, if not legitimize, then nevertheless assume the hegemonic discourses within the class structures of their times as shared background. It is against this background that we consider the construction of a continuity of

⁹ It should go without saying that we do not mean to imply that this recognition of mutuality and interdependence automatically results in the erosion of power relations or power balance.

identity discourses – starting in Athens, carried on throughout Rome and the Early Church Fathers, rediscovered during the Renaissance, and feeding the Enlightenment – as more than problematic.

Two streams of a new kind of discourse can be marked as keystones for what was at stake during this time of settlement (roughly 1750–1850): for one, the turn to a rational and reflective attitude toward nature and social life, called the Enlightenment period. This period is said to overlap and be followed by a time period best characterized as one in which revising this reflective attitude to include self-reflective dimensions, paired with a subjective and affective engagement with all realms of life, including nature, others, and selves, took place. This new and inwardly directed sensitivity, labeled Romanticism (1770–1848), also served as a critical response to an economic and cold rationality that had brought about a focus on mechanistic causal explanations of (human) life, together with a strong interest in the body (as a biological object) and the psyche (as a psychological system). The emergence of Corpuscularianism in the works of Enlightenment rationalists and empiricists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, René Descartes, and other intellectuals of the time allowed for a distinction of primary (outer, visible) and secondary (inner, hidden) qualities. Galileo (1914/1638; 1909/1842, pp. 33ff.) famously insisted on a distinction between an objective world describable in mechanistic terms and subjective experience. The consequences of these intellectual developments also influenced the newly emerging narrative of self and identity, and, as such, paved the way for a modern, post-Enlightenment, post-industrialization rationality.

Out of the group of Enlightenment thinkers, David Hume (1888, p. xix) first envisioned psychology as a science, and he indeed thought of it as the foundation of all other sciences. Hume's work exemplifies contemporaneously emerging debates: He discussed identity in the face of change and the place of human beings in the entirety of nature. Like Kant after him, Hume turned away from speculative metaphysics in favor of reason. Kant, who primarily unfolded his theory of self and identity in response to Hume, can be taken to provide the grounds for a stronger emphasis on subjectivity among the Romanticist thinkers. While Enlightenment rationalists had largely become dogmatic and the empiricists had largely fallen for skepticism, Kant provided a new synthesis. Most importantly, he discussed identity in relation to a unity of consciousness, stability over time, and as the source of agency. Kant's noumenal self (1998, p. 369), and the distinction of a noumenal world that stands in opposition to the phenomenal world that we experience, forms the base of modern concepts of *interiority*. This inner world, for Kant, also meant that the mind does not merely receive sensations from the world, as the empiricists would have it, but actively structures sensations. As such, every experience comes with an *I think* that *attributes* intention and agency (Kant, 1998/1787). The unifier of these thoughts is the self; a self that is an autonomous meaning-maker. It is at this point that Kant borrows from French

Romanticism and specifically Rousseau. Through reading Rousseau's *Emile*, Kant reflected on human nature and "to honor human beings" (Kant, 2011/1764, p. 96). The notions of a self as individual, innocent, and benevolent, a self that stands in contrast to a corrupting society, all relate to Rousseau's Romanticism. Drawing from this, Kant develops his liberalism that posits all human beings as fundamentally equal. One of the quintessential tensions in modern democracy – that between equality and individuality – is reflected in this debate. Post-Kantian German philosophers extended this new notion of individuality and equality. However, they were less concerned with science than their Enlightenment predecessors (including Kant) and instead showed a heightened interest in religion and the social aspects of the self. The playwrights and poets Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe were at the forefront of this movement known as *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress). From the young Goethe's writings springs a self that is haunted by opposing forces. Struggling with the allures of life and death, the only escape from this is finding your true self, and failure to do so may lead to suicide. The publication of *The sorrows of young Werther*, a coming-of-age *Bildungsroman* of unrequited love in 1774, brought instant fame to Goethe and allegedly led to several cases of suicide among the readership, emulating Werther's behavior in the novel. Schiller collaborated closely with Goethe and shared many of his views. Yet, he was more focused on the social world and thereby further bridged the gap between Rousseauian Romanticism and Kantian rationalism and empiricism. In accordance with Rousseau (2002/1762), Schiller (1795), too, believed in society's corrupting effects on the individual. However, he insisted that it was not society per se but the particular turn it had taken during the Enlightenment. Like so many philosophers to follow, Schiller believed in the power of art and aesthetics as the path to human flourishing and inner wholeness.

As we argued above, the material and socio-political changes that are taken as having prepared for changes in the conceptualizations of personal and collective identities in the writing elites, and in the consumption of their writings feeding new collective European identity discourses, started to happen long before Enlightenment and Romanticism. The construct of a Renaissance (stretching roughly from the twelfth/fourteenth to the seventeenth century and coinciding with the so-called Age of Discovery and Colonialization) served to portray the changes as a more continuous development relating to more global processes of integration and differentiation. We have already mentioned the problematic concoction of a continuous line of a reflective agency construct stretching from Athens via Rome and early Christianity into the Enlightenment as one of the credits of the Renaissance. Nevertheless, in concert with an increase of dense and durable communicative networks across European territories and languages, this suggests a more gradual transformation in consciousness that could spread among the newly emergent classes in Europe. However, we should keep in mind that two

contradictions riddle these constructs of epochal changes. First, although the descriptions of changes in consciousness point toward freedom, equality (collective and personal), and progress as (new) ideals, they clash with European colonialization, rapaciousness, and slavery in the new colonies, and freshly emerging inequalities, inequities, and injustices between the newly emerging classes, advanced weaponry and warfare, and exploitation of environmental resources. Second, descriptions of changes in consciousness can be viewed as, and often are, serving to legitimize these new structural conditions. Nonetheless, both of these may also help provide points of critique and departure for options in designing alternatives.

2.2.4 Decentering European Modern Identity: Alternative Modernities, Indigeneity, and the Global Transformation

We have already cautioned that taking a European development of modernity as the paradigmatic universal (and imperialistic) mode of discourse on identity has resulted in a reference to a sense of self as exceptional and superior to other historical and geopolitical sense-making strategies. Nonetheless, at least two other choices exist.

First, we can treat the European strand of sociogenesis as one variant among other developments of modernity. Following this line of argument, a subject-centered form of reason that emerged as European modernity was always paralleled by other emerging sociogenetic sense-making strategies of societies at different historical times and locations. The concept of *multiple modernities*, developed initially by Shmuel Eisenstadt (2001, 2003) and elaborated by Peter Wagner (2011) (see Delanty, 2013 for a critical review), effectively challenges attempts to universalize and essentialize the European model, with its discourse of exceptionalism and hegemony vis-à-vis other modernization projects in the rest of the world. We also need to take into consideration that this European project took place in a global context. What we claimed above as a project of differentiation and integration, where traders between different emerging nation-states and across different languages had learned to communicate across their differences, and thereby learned to constitute themselves as same-*and*-different within a newly defined European territory, applied equally to the world outside, i.e., vis-à-vis the peoples of the new languages and cultures beyond European borders.¹⁰ Avram Alpert (2019), borrowing from Edward Said and Raymond Williams, and following their claim, argues constructively that “the modern world and those in it were ‘constituted’ by colonial encounters” (p. 4).

¹⁰ D. T. Suzuki stretches and claims for the European concept of enlightenment, “when one is enlightened, he does not stand out from the rest of the world, but embraces it . . . The very moment of enlightenment experience takes in the world and its totality” (Suzuki, 1952, cited in Alpert, 2019, p. 2).

A second way of decentering the hegemonic European sociogenetic model of a new consciousness in relation to other sense-making strategies of identity and self would be to explicitly mark the European variant as local and native and as an indigenous strand of sociogenesis. Following this line of reason, a European strand would become easier to set in relation to other indigenous cultural traditions. First, this view would potentially lend itself better to critical interrogation of the assumption of the individual as the basic building block of society (Smith, 1999, p. 49), and the modern European wisdom of pitting human *nature* against *nature in the natural world* (ibid., p. 48). Second, setting particular indigenous discourses and their sociogenesis in relation to European indigenous discourses forces a sorting through of how the latter has threatened, and in some cases eliminated, the maintenance and reclaiming efforts of the former. Third, it would be of interest to the topic of identity and self-consciousness to lay out the potential benefits of non-European indigenous identity discourses. We will return to this argument below when discussing budding alternatives to dominant European identity discourses.

To sum up, it should be noted that attempts to decenter the project of European identity formation will undoubtedly open up considerations about the consequences of adopting historiographies that wrestle for authenticity and legitimization. Probably more important, it may enable discussions about newly emerging identity discourses – discourses that emerge as a function of particular historical moments, particular places, and particular social forces. To follow up on and deepen how identities and identity projects can be theorized along these dimensions would open up debates about postcolonial and subaltern theories of identity, as well as identity projects emerging from marginalization and oppression, and embed them in historical and experiential contexts – debates that are outside the scope of this chapter but worth following up on elsewhere.

2.3 Identity and Modern Psychology

In the preceding section, we have proposed the case for a historical emergence of European modern identity discourses that projected itself into sense-making strategies of identity and sense of self within a modern European collective consciousness. This leads to the question of how this particular kind of consciousness could expand from here into shared contemporary expressions of identity, self, subject, individual, and conscious/conscience, the way they surface in our contemporary use in US English. The line of reason we pursue in the following is that our current, everyday usage of identity discourses emerged over centuries in Europe and extended into configurations of identity discourses in contemporaneous US English through the newly emerging discipline of psychology. More concretely, we claim that psychology in Europe emerged as an academic discipline that took basic tenets of modern

identity and made them the center of scholastic and educational endeavors. From there, these moved into newly emerging strands of psychology in the US – from where, in turn, psychology became a global discipline, providing sense-making strategies for self and identity for common, everyday discourses across the languages around the globe.

To start with, there were large numbers of conceptual ponderings on issues of identity and sense of self before the dawn of European modernity, surfacing not only in emerging European nation-states and national languages but in different spheres in the world. Within the European schools of thought, a sense of identity with a self-reflecting interiority can be traced back to the emerging academic disciplines of theology and hermeneutic text critique, and then, during the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning to take off within European philosophy as the exploration of the human soul/mind. Two particular European traditions, one surfacing under the header of experimental psychology, the other in the form of psychoanalysis, are claimed to have served as two relatively smooth bridges that shaped psychology in the US. Kurt Danziger (1997) has summarized one of them in terms of how a science-grounded psychology was able to define its subject matter by tracing the scholastic experiences of US psychologists in mainly German laboratories from the mid-1800s onward. Matching the unfolding of these new traditions within US academia with shifts in methodologies that dominated the conduct of psychological research around the globe is another contribution, summarized in Danziger's *Constructing the subject: Historical origins of psychological research* (1990). A second tradition, exceptionally well outlined by Illouz (2008), and the one that we will follow up in more detail here, credits Freud's visit to Clark University in 1909, and the enthusiastic reception of his lectures by a newly emerging free-spirited, upper-middle-class, humanistic audience. These two traditions remained separate within the American Psychological Association (APA) that was founded at Clark University thirteen years before Freud's visit.

According to Illouz (2008, 2012), Freud's adoption of the modern discourse of an interiority that can be turned to for the examination of one's own authentic wishes and desires, but that can also serve as a refuge,¹¹ was met by a sentiment that had long been endorsed by the highly educated, emerging American secular and liberal elites. Freudian ideas were viewed as taking the Enlightenment two steps further: into deeper levels of self-exploration and in a more rigorous secular direction of personal independence and freedom. A second direction opened up more radical possibilities of self-advancement with the hope of a cleaner and better moral conscience. Although there had

¹¹ "The energetic and successful man is he who succeeds, by dint of labor, in transforming his wish fancies into reality. Where this is not successful in consequence of the resistance of the outer world and the weakness of the individual, . . . the individual takes refuge in his satisfying world of fancy" (Freud, 1909, fifth Clark Lecture).

been pre-Freudian anticipations of an unconscious level of interiority, typically attributed to literary fictional characters (cf. Vallins, 2011), Freud's division into the ego/*I*, the *superego*, and a more deep-seated level of hidden memories and formerly uncontrollable desires and drives, the *id*, opened up new techniques of self-interrogation and surveillance (for more detail, see Habermas & Kemper, this volume).

The assumption of an inner self that is monitored by itself requires a shift from the public as monitoring and judging what is right and wrong toward individuals' internalized interpretative frames such as shame and embarrassment (cf. Elias, 1939) as authoritative corrective. In other words, conversations between communally anchored social actors are assumed to turn inwardly into conversations held by the ego with its interiority. Through the emergence of psychology, it takes center stage in academic and public probing. First, it should be noted that this process of self-monitoring is modeled after the rational discourse of an early bourgeois type of reasoning discourse, i.e., that irrational or repressed desires, and disruptive emotions, can be identified, scrutinized, and ultimately kept in check. This early formulation of the therapeutic dialogue has been elaborated and refined in what is currently investigated under the headers of *voices* and *dialogicality* (cf. Bertau; Gonzalez Rial & Guimarães; Salgado & Cunha, all this volume) and in motivational enhancement approaches to therapy. Second, this kind of tracking of and reasoning with oneself is thought to be productive only if it is performed in the form of an authentic disclosure, i.e., in ways that truly engage the psychodynamic entities of ego, superego, and id in identifications of what is right and what is wrong – following the basic principles of therapeutic interviewing (cf. Illouz, 2006). In this respect, therapeutic disclosure as authentic relates directly to the scientific materialists' attempts to uncover the body's inner workings and the mind as a function of energy flow.

A number of recent inquiries have taken up Elias's pioneering thesis of the historical changes from a social and public navigation of a hetero-controlled identity to a private and self-controlled individuality (Elias, 1939). Illouz's (2008, 2012) spearheading scrutiny of the emergence of the therapeutic ethos since Freud's Clark Lectures in 2009 in particular has documented how a therapeutic psychological culture could loop back from psychology as an academic discipline into mainstream common sense-making in popular discourses about self, identity, subjectivity, and individual worthiness over the last decades. Ole Jacob Madsen (2020) gives an illuminating exposition of how psychology as a discipline ultimately fed into what he calls "the permanent triumph of the therapeutic" (p. 23), and he showcases how therapeutic culture could develop into a global phenomenon. Others (summarized in Nehring, Madsen, Cabanas, Mills & Kerrigan, 2020) have developed a body of research highlighting several ways in which the therapeutic ethos has resulted in a boom in self-help products. These products are successfully promoted by a happiness and wellness industry that promises to respond to people's problems

but in practice “largely deflects, distracts, and pacifies social subjects in the neoliberal era that promotes the ruthless pursuit of domination, power, and capital” (Rimke, 2020, p. 47), thereby producing new forms of oppression covering up even more subtle exploitation.

Now, having arrived at a seemingly rather dark side of where our historical pursuit of the marriage between new European identity discourses and a modern psychology with its own identity discourses has taken us, we return to our original question: Is there space for alternatives or counternarratives to European identity projects? More specifically, can we delineate mechanisms for discerning the value and merits of alternative approaches to identity and identity research? We share Heidi Rimke’s (2020) assessment that the triumph of the therapeutic across the globe is not homogenous, and neither is it total. Madsen (2020) also concludes that the therapeutic threat “does not mean that it becomes a hegemonic ideology that necessarily produces uniformity” (p. 22). Rather, he and Rimke (2020) both maintain that local traditions, with their own particular values and norms, will most likely develop their own unique blends “of regional peculiarities” (Madsen, 2020, p. 23). In this context, it would be particularly interesting to follow up on how (other) Indigenous approaches to psychology and identity research have emerged as contrastive and potentially new collaborative frameworks (cf. Smith, 1999).

2.3 Alternatives?

Finally, as we cautioned initially and throughout this chapter, historiographies are typically meant to legitimize the present, and often also particular future orientations, including their underlying assumptions and values; alternatively, they can be critical of the present, its desirability and moral/ethical implications. Our aim in tracing the historical conditions that enabled an emergence of European modern discourses about identity, self, and its neighboring concepts was to show ways of decentering these discourses, i.e., stripping them of their privilege in serving as Eurocentric reference culture (cf. Delanty, 2015). However, taking this critical position quasi from the outset does not strip us of our own positionality, and neither does it result in a direct and demonstrable road to alternatives. Nevertheless, we would like to end our chapter with a few takeaways from our excursion into the histories of identities, as we promised in our opening section. These are framed in the form of questions rather than suggestions and will end with a brief excursion into alternative Indigenous identity discourses.

Without a doubt, identity research that works with a conceptualization of an internal subject who reflects on their interiority has motivated ingenious questionnaires and innovative interview techniques that attempt to unearth deep-seated cognitive and psychoanalytic inferences that people arguably rely on when reflecting their sense of self. Chapter 3 in this volume by Sue

Widdicombe and Cristina Marinho presents paradigmatic types of this sort of research. But what about alternatives? Do they need to negate the concepts of interiority and reflexivity as cornerstones for identity work and identity formation processes? Or, is it possible to *simply* bracket the interiority–exteriority distinction – as well as the reflective versus non-, un-, or pre-reflective distinctions? And what would a pursuit of research look like along the lines of identity displays in people’s actions and interactions – without banking on their conscious, self-reflective awareness as empirical evidence? Furthermore, are there any consequences concerning the role attributed to language in identity formation processes and how language can be approached analytically? We believe this is where personal identity research can learn from organizational identity theories, where the navigation of affinities and differences between organizations and temporal stability and change are investigated empirically as actions taken and communicated. There, typically, any recourse to something like an interiority (e.g., the *heart* and *soul* of a company) is clearly understood metaphorically as anthropomorphism. Also, a number of contributions to this handbook seem to steer clear of investigating interiorities. Interestingly, these contributions position themselves within traditions that originated in neighboring disciplines – e.g., symbolic interactionism, discursive psychology, ethnography, and conversation analysis (cf. Becker; Brinkmann; Giaxoglou & Georgakopoulou; Hydén; Kaplan, Flum, Bridgelal, & Garner; Locke & Montague; Norris & Matelau-Doherty; Riley, Robson, & Evans; Wilkes & Speer, all this volume). It is also worth noting that language is investigated here in its interactional and relational function, rather than in its role in reflecting on internal representations.

Our second set of questions concerns the status of what we had termed *sites* for identity management, i.e., constructions of temporal (stability and change), synchronic (differentiation and integration vis-à-vis others), and agentive (versus subjectification) senses of identity. Concerning these three sites, we can ask which of them are considered central to approaching identity theoretically – in this volume or elsewhere: Some investigations center on one, others focus on two, but rarely are the intersections of all three central to identity theory and their empirical investigation. Starting, for instance, with the navigation of identity as maneuvering temporal constancy/stability and change, it may be of interest that constancy, i.e., no change, is often characterized and, we would argue, mischaracterized in terms of *continuity*. Widdicombe and Marinho (this volume), for instance, chose this course of action. Similarly, Tilmann Habermas and Nina Kemper (also this volume) take continuity in contrast to breaks, disruptions, and ruptures as most relevant for the construction of personal temporality. What is under consideration here are two different change trajectories that are juxtaposed: one in the form of a positive and preferable continuous form of change, the other as discontinuous and disrupting the preferred form of change. The former

is controlled by an agentive steering toward (continuous) progressive self-development; the latter is experienced as a disruptive world-to-person direction of agency constellations. Note that there is nothing wrong with this particular way to coordinate constancy and change as directions of fit for agency navigation. However, these kinds of considerations easily feed attributions of beneficial worth to a continuous self, especially if under the aegis of self-agency. In contrast, change becomes more of an antagonistic force – especially if not under the control of self-agency. What is noticeable here is how seemingly innocent sites of being-in-the-world are theorized and become empirically invested with what we had identified earlier as a hegemonic European way of modern identity construction – raising again the question of whether or how there are ways to do this differently.

An interesting alternative with regard to the terrain of self–other identity relations is offered in the form of a relational counter-discourse that radically questions interiority and reflection as the central place from where individuals differentiate and integrate their sense of self vis-à-vis others. In a relational ontology, as Anne Salmond (2012, p. 125) demonstrates with respect to Māori values and their traditions, for example, a sense of self is fundamentally embedded in the world, rooted within a position of situatedness, and inhabiting and navigating places from there. It does not require a center in the form of a command bridge from where the *out-there* is navigated and conquered, because relations and relationships are always already given, and a sense of self is given or taking off from there. This relational perspective challenges European modern discourses of the self as outside of, and often in contrast, to nature (cf. Smith, 1999) and questions assumptions about inner consistency and self-actualization as striving for inner consistency and coherence (Salmond, 2012). This is where, according to Smith (1999), “Indigenous peoples’ ideas and beliefs about the origins of the world, their explanations of the environment, often embedded in complicated metaphors and mythic tales are now being sought as the basis for thinking more laterally about current theories about the environment, the earth and the universe” (p. 159). Overall, since relational counter-discourses are considered eco-friendlier, more sustainable, and more productive than current European modernity discourses (cf. Sillitoe, 1998), they have become better positioned and more accentuated to be heard. For example, reviewing the seemingly context-free and universally accepted model of (modern) biomedicine in its own European Indigenous traditions (Sax, 2014) opens perspectives on its limitations. But even more so, other Indigenous medicines of what are typically called traditional healing methods can be newly evaluated in terms of their contributions to healing and well-being. A renewal of European sense-making strategies in terms of a deeper appreciation of identity projects grounded in a close human–environment connection can be another consequence. This could result, though not simply or straightforwardly, in a deeper awareness of

environmental conditions and connectivity with the natural world and its inhabitants – and lead to, as Smith (1999) points out for Māori identities, an example of local sense-making: “Māori knowledge represents the body of knowledge which, in today’s society, can be extended, alongside that of existing Western knowledge” (p. 175). And as suggested by Margaret Bruchac (2014), researchers working within other traditions may be able to “gain information and insight by consulting Indigenous traditions; these localized knowledges contain crucial information that can explain and contextualize scientific data” (ibid., p. 3814).

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