The Link between Identity and Role Performance

PETER J. BURKE
Indiana University

DONALD C. REITZES
Georgia State University

Despite interest in the influence of self-concept on behavior, research has been limited by (1) the need to better understand the mechanism by which self influences role behaviors, (2) a reliance on self-esteem as the only measure of self-concept, and (3) the absence of quantitative measures of self-concept. The research reported here is designed to test one formulation of the link between identity and behavior. It is based on recent theoretical conceptions of identity, advances in its measurement, and the assumption that identities motivate behaviors that have meanings consistent (isomorphic) with the identity. Data obtained from 640 college students are used to discover and measure four dimensions of meaning pertaining to the college student identity, and to assess the impact of student identities on the two "performance" variables of educational plans and participation in social activities. The findings strongly support the hypothesized link of identity and performance through common meanings.

INTRODUCTION

This research began with the question, "What is the connection between *identity* and role *performance*?" As Stryker (1980:385) has noted, "An adequate social psychology of the self must eventually seriously ask whether the assertion that the self is an active creator of social behavior and relationships is more than a statement of faith." Indeed, the relationship between identity (self) and behavior is complex and probably reciprocal. "The issue in analyzing relationships between self-conception and behavior is where to focus analysis within this sequence, extracting and abstracting out a set of elements to represent the basic causal links" (Wells, 1978:198).

A review of the literature on the relationship between self-concept and behavior indicates that there has been a great deal of empirical work. There have been studies of the self as an outcome of some process or situation (e.g., Coopersmith, 1959, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965; Shrauger and Schoeneman, 1979).

Though fewer in number, there have been studies of the self as agent or cause of behavior (e.g., McGuire, 1968; Backman and Secord, 1968; Walster, 1970; Alexander and Knight, 1971; Wells, 1978), and there has been work dealing with various conceptualizations of the self and its components (e.g., McCall and Simmons, 1966; Turner, 1968; Gordon, 1968, 1976; Rosenberg, 1979; Schwartz and Stryker, 1970). But in spite of all of this work, we have not yet achieved any clear understanding of the self-behavior relationship. Findings are quite varied and often inconsistent; measurement procedures are (with the exception of self-esteem measures) not well developed quantitatively; and the link between measurement procedures and theory is weak (Wylie, 1974). To improve our understanding of the influence of self-concepts on behavior (and vice versa) there must be two developments: (1) a better understanding of the dynamics and mechanisms by which the self and behaviors influence each other (Cottrell, 1950; Turner, 1979); and (2) an expanded treatment of self-concept beyond reliance on self-esteem (Rosenberg, unpubl.).

This paper makes a beginning in the filling of this gap in our understanding. It applies the theoretical formulations of identity developed by McCall and Simmons (1966) and Stryker (1968) and the advances in measurement provided by

Burke and Tully (1977) to the study of the relationship between self-concept and behavior. The central argument is that individuals are motivated to formulate plans and achieve levels of performance or activity that reinforce, support, and confirm their identities. Note that this is a two-way process. We are saying that the self operates in choosing behaviors and that the behaviors reinforce and support the self. Our hypothesis is that the mutual link between identities and behaviors occurs through their having *common underlying frames of reference*. We propose that the frame of reference one uses to assess his or her *identity* in a situation is the *same* frame of reference used to assess his or her own *behavior* in that situation. Further, we hypothesize that this common frame of reference lies in the *meaning* of the identity and the *meaning* of the performance. A link exists to the extent that these two meanings are the same. To test this hypothesis, therefore, we must determine both the meanings of identities and the meanings of behaviors. Once these are known, we should be able to predict both the direction (positive or negative) and strength of the effects of identity on behaviors.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Identity

Following the work of McCall and Simmons (1966), Stryker (1968), and Burke and Tully (1977), self-concepts are thought to be composed, in part, of role/identities, often abbreviated below as identities. Identities are meanings one attributes to oneself in a role (and that others attribute to one). This definition suggests three characteristics of an identity. First, identities are social products. Identities are formed and maintained through the social processes of (a) naming, that is, locating the self in socially recognizable categories (Foote, 1951; Stryker, 1968); (b) interaction with others entailing the processes of identification and exchange (Stone, 1962; McCall and Simmons, 1966); and (c) the confirmation and validation of self-concepts by means of self-presentation and altercasting (Goffman, 1959; Weinstein, 1969).

Second, identities are self meanings that are formed in particular situations and organized hierarchically to produce the self (Stryker, 1968). The meanings of an identity are, in part, the products of the particular opportunities and demand characteristics of the social situation, and are based on the similarities and differences of a role with related, complementary, or counter-roles (Lindesmith and Strauss, 1956; Merton, 1957; Turner, 1968).

Third, identities are symbolic and reflexive in character. It is through interaction with others that these self meanings come to be known and understood by the individual. In role relevant situations others respond to the person as a performer in a particular role. The meanings of the self are learned from responses of others to one's own actions. One's actions develop meaning through the responses of others, and over time, call up in the person the same responses that are called up in others. One's actions, words, and appearances thus become significant symbols (Mead, 1934). Indeed, it is the symbolic and the reflexive character of an identity (and self-concept) that integrate self-as-subject and self-as-object (Stryker, 1968; Burke, 1980; Wells, 1978). Further, it is the symbolic nature of the self that led Burke and Tully (1977) and Heise (1977a, 1977b, 1979) to apply Osgood et al.'s (1957) semantic differential technique for the measurement of meaning to the measurement of identity.

The Link between Self-Concept and Role Performance

The reflexivity of an identity, implied in the notion of significant symbol, allows the occurrence of a link between identity and performance. An identity provides an individual with a standpoint or frame of reference in which to interpret both the social situation and his or her own actions or potential actions (Foote, 1951; Rosenberg, 1979; Wells, 1978). Wells (1978:198) notes

that self-conception is fundamentally an interpretive process and it is relevant to the explanation of behaviors as it relates to the

meanings that those behaviors have for the enacting person. While self-concept may be theoretically linked to "objective" states or outcomes, this linkage is indirect and mediated through interpretive events.

It is one's *actions* that others ·judge as being appropriate or inappropriate for the *identity* one has, and appropriateness can only be gauged in terms of the meaning of the behavior relative to the meaning of the identity and alternative counter-identities (cf. Heise, 1979). From a control systems point of view (Powers, 1975), the self maintains control by altering performances until there is some degree of correspondence between one's identity and the identity that is implied by one's actions interpreted (in part through reflexiveness) within a common cultural framework.

To reiterate, a role/identity is a set of meanings that are taken to characterize the self-in-role. Following Osgood (1957), these meanings may be thought of as mediational responses that are characterized by direction (e.g., toward being active or toward being passive) and intensity or strength of response. The meaning of a role/identity lies in the direction and intensity of the mediational response to it. Similarly, the meaning of a behavior lies in the direction and intensity of the mediational response to it. If the directions and intensities of the mediational responses to the self and to one's behavior are the same, then the meanings of the identity and the performance are the same.

The important point here is that the link between identity and performance is through *common meanings*. The meanings of the self (as object) are established and assessed in terms of the meanings of the performances generated by that self (as subject) within the culture of the interactional situation. This leads to our hypothesis that variations in role performance can be predicted from variations in role/identities *provided those variations in performance and identities are measured along the same dimensions (directions of the mediational response) of meaning.*[1]

This hypothesis is much like the consistency hypothesis of other writers. Rosenberg (1979), for example, has noted two ways self-conceptions motivate behavior: (1) self-esteem striving or the wish to think well of oneself, and (2) self-consistency or the wish to maintain one's self-picture (identity) and to protect self-conceptions against change. Earlier work by Backman and Secord (1968) had suggested a similar mechanism whereby self influenced role through the processes of role selection and role portrayal in order to achieve a state of congruence. This state was said to exist when the actor's behavior and that of others implied definitions of self that were congruent with aspects of the actor's self-concept. Our hypothesis builds upon these other conceptions of the link between identity and performance by specifying more clearly that congruence or consistency refers to the semantic similarity between the identity and the performance. To the *degree* that they are identical in meaning, we have consistency.

The degree of consistency is a function of the relevance and importance of the common dimension of meaning. First, the dimensions of meaning used to assess an identity may be irrelevant to the dimensions of meaning used to assess the behavior in question. In this case the question of consistency never arises, and whether a person with the given identity engages in the behavior in question will depend upon other factors entirely. Second, although both the identity and the behavior may be assessed along the same dimension of meaning, it may be that the dimension is more important for assessing behavior than for assessing identity (or vice versa). In this case the question of consistency does arise, but it is not the only relevant factor. Hence, the correspondence between identity and behavior

---

[1] Although much of our presentation is in terms of the influence of identity on performance, we recognize that there is also some influence in the opposite direction as well, although, as Burke (1980) points

out, there is reason to believe that the influence of identity on behavior is far greater than the reverse. In any case, our argument is less about the direction of the effect than the nature of the link between identity and behavior. Regardless of whether the correlations are the result of the influence of identity on performance or vice versa, these relationships do exist where and to the magnitude expected by our hypotheses.

need not be strong. Finally, if the identity and the behavior are assessed along the same, important dimension of meaning, then the question of consistency becomes very salient and there should be a strong correspondence between the two. Thus, in addition to the main hypothesis linking identity and behavior through common meanings, we have a corollary hypothesis, which states that the relative strength of the identity-behavior link is related to the relevance and importance of common dimensions of meaning.

PROCEDURES

Measuring Identities

For this research we chose the college student role/identity for investigation. The Burke-Tully method of measuring identities requires the assessment of the identity in question relative to other relevant counter-identities that serve to anchor the identity in question (cf. Lindesmith and Strauss, 1956). In their investigation of the gender identities of elementary school children, Burke and Tully (1977) began by collecting sets of adjectives that children used to describe the roles of boy and girl. These adjectives, together with their opposites, were placed in a semantic differential format to form measures of the meanings of the male and female roles. Discriminant analysis was then used to locate the adjective items which maximally distinguished the role meanings. Finally, the adjective items and their weights were applied to self descriptions to form a measure of gender identity.

For the Burke-Tully study the counter-roles of male and female seem fairly obvious. For the present study potential counter-roles and their attendant counter-identities were less obvious. Three categories of potential counter-identities were considered: (1) prior and subsequent identities (for role/identities that are part of a developmental sequence); (2) role/identities of others with which the main role/identity might interact; and (3) role/identities one might have had if choices had been made differently. The role/identities of High School Student, Graduate Student, and College Graduate were

selected from the first category. Non-College Peer was selected as possibly belonging to the second category, but more likely to the third. We had contemplated additional representatives from category two (Professor, Counselor, etc.) but space limitations precluded their inclusion.

We thus began by measuring the meanings of the college student role/identity with respect to the counter-identities of graduate student, high school student, non-college peer, and employed college graduate, for a sample of 640 undergraduates at a large midwestern university (Reitzes and Burke, 1980). For this we used the semantic differential and discriminant function analysis as suggested by Burke and Tully (1977).

This technique essentially involves self-administered paper and pencil methods to measure something that is by its nature an internal psychological process, and hence it suffers from the reliability and validity limitations of any such paper and pencil test. One might argue that such methods fail to tap the kinds of choice behaviors that would be made in a "real" interaction setting. There are two responses to such an argument. First, the question is empirical and is the object of investigation in this paper. Second, lower reliability in the measurement of identity means that any test of its relationship to overt performance is that much more conservative, and any findings are that much more significant.

The results of the discriminant analysis (presented in Table 1) yielded four dimensions of meaning that are important in distinguishing among the five roles in question (i.e., college student, graduate student, etc.). Based on the coefficients for each adjective-pair in the semantic differential, these dimensions of meaning were labeled (1) Academic Responsibility, (2) Intellectualism,[2] (3) Sociability, and (4)

---

[2] This dimension was originally labeled "intellectual curiosity" on the basis of large coefficients for *studious, competitive, open-minded,* and *creative.* The fact that there are also large coefficients for *lazy* (as opposed to hard working) and *group-oriented* suggests that the kind of intellectual curiosity being tapped is not the bookish, withdrawn sort. Rather, there seems to be a kind of social facade involved, which is better captured by the term "intellectualism."

Table 1. Standardized Classification Coefficients for Adjective-Pairs from the Discriminant Analysis of the Five Roles*

Item		Academic Responsibility	Intellectualism	Sociability	Assertiveness
Pressured	(Not Pressured)	.22	−.12	.56	−.20
Competitive	(Non-competitive)	−.01	.44	−.04	.26
Studious	(Non-studious)	.33	.64	−.44	−.57
Ambitious	(Non-ambitious)	.03	.07	.09	.48
Motivated	(Non-motivated)	.23	.09	.00	.32
Dedicated	(Undedicated)	.10	.01	−.20	−.08
Hardworking	(Lazy)	.10	−.40	−.23	−.06
Responsible	(Irresponsible)	.25	−.16	.38	−.11
Critical	(Accepting)	.00	.09	−.01	−.15
Social	(Antisocial)	−.21	.12	.53	−.01
Apathetic	(Interested)	−.04	.03	.22	.05
Involved	(Uninvolved)	−.02	.12	−.14	.34
Friendly	(Unfriendly)	−.17	−.08	.15	.09
Concerned	(Unconcerned)	.01	.02	.08	−.20
Aggressive	(Non-aggressive)	−.04	−.02	−.12	.37
Sensitive	(Insensitive)	−.19	−.12	.01	−.02
Dependent	(Independent)	−.24	.16	.22	.15
Open-minded	(Close-minded)	.09	.37	.42	−.13
Mature	(Immature)	.32	−.21	.11	.00
Realistic	(Idealistic)	.14	−.25	.02	.45
Individualistic	(Group Oriented)	.34	−.30	−.16	−.17
Inquisitive	(Bored)	.06	.17	−.16	.03
Optimistic	(Pessimistic)	−.08	.07	.04	.24
Creative	(Dull)	−.07	.25	.09	.19
η^2		.62	.44	.14	.09
$p \leq$		.001	.001	.001	.001

Note: The direction of the coefficient is toward the adjective on the left.

* College Student, Graduate Student, High School Student, Non-College Peer, Employed College Graduate.

Personal Assertiveness. It should be noted that these results are similar to the factors found by Borgatta (1969) in his study of college students using a different sample and a different technique (factor analysis). Finally, a score on each of the four dimensions was calculated for each of the 640 students in the sample by applying the discriminant function weights to the self-as-college-student ratings provided by the respondents. These scores provide our measure of the respondents' identities as students. For each dimension the individual's score is a measure of the intensity of the mediational response, while its sign (+,−) is a measure of the direction of that response. Thus, each score includes indications of both direction and intensity of the mediational response or meaning of the identity. The means for the self-ratings of each of the four dimensions are given in Table 2.

Assessing this procedure, we see first that the results are based on the *shared perceptions* of characteristics of persons in role positions. Second, the procedure has incorporated and is *based on the relationship between various counter-identities* in semantic space. Third, the procedure recognizes and incorporates the *link between identities and roles* since it is the self-in-role that is being assessed. And fourth, it results in a measure of individual role/identities along each of the shared underlying *dimensions of meaning*, which distinguish among the counter-roles in question.

Measuring Performance and Its Meanings

Two different kinds of "performance variables" were selected for this study. The first, more of an attitudinal measure, concerns the *educational plans* of the re-

Table 2. Identification with the College Student Role: Mean score for the self description "as a college student I am" on each of the underlying dimensions of meaning

	Academic Responsibility	Intellectualism	Sociability	Personal Assertiveness
As a college student I am	0.94	0.22	0.43	−0.29

spondent. This is a single item measure in which individual responses were classified into one of three categories: (1) less than a B.A.; (2) B.A.; and (3) an advanced degree. The second variable, *participation in student social activities*, was measured by constructing a scale from questions dealing with the frequency of participation in the following set of social activities: (1) going to the movies; (2) going to restaurants, bars, coffee houses, or pizza parlors; (3) going to sports events; and (4) going to private or sponsored parties (reliability $\alpha = 0.93$).

Since our hypothesis concerning the link between identity and role performance suggests that it is through common frames of reference in underlying meanings of identity and behavior, we cannot test this hypothesis simply by relating the students' identity measures to their performances. We must first know the extent to which each of the four dimensions of meaning relevant to assessing the identity of college student (i.e., Academic Responsibility, Intellectualism, Sociability, and Personal Assertiveness) is relevant to assessing the performances we have measured (educational plans and participation in student social activities).

To get this information, a separate, additional sample of 95 undergraduate students was given a questionnaire containing, in semantic differential format, the same 24 adjective pairs that were used to measure college student identity meanings. The concepts to be rated, however, were not the roles of college student, graduate student, etc., but were activities. For the educational plans variable, two "concepts" were rated: (1) "A student who plans to go to graduate school is ____," and (2) "A student who plans to get a job after college is ____." For the participation in social activities variable, two additional "concepts" were rated: (1) "A student who frequently engages in social activities like going to the movies, restaurants, sports events, and parties is ____," and (2) "A student who does not engage in social activities like going to the movies, restaurants, sports events, and parties is ____."

The average meaning of each of these behaviors on each of the four student identity dimensions was assessed by applying the weights used to measure identities (see Table 1). The results are given in Table 3. We see in these results that there are large[3] differences in the meaning of "continuing on for an advanced degree" and "getting a job" *only on the dimensions of Academic Responsibility and Personal Assertiveness*, with getting an advanced degree associated with high levels of Academic Responsibility but with low levels of Assertiveness. The meanings of "participating" and of "not participating" in the various kinds of social activities are different *on all four dimensions*, with "participation" being associated with low levels of Academic Responsibility, but high levels of Sociability, Personal Assertiveness, and Intellectualism.

Given these results from the auxiliary sample concerning the relevance for student identities of each of the four dimensions of meaning of the activities, our hypothesis that the link between identities and behavior lies in their having corresponding meanings leads to the following predictions:

1. Persons whose identities as college students are high on Academic Responsibility will be (a) more likely to plan for an advanced degree, and (b) less likely to participate in the measured student activities than college students with identities low on Academic Responsibility.

2. Persons whose identities as college students are high on Sociability will be (a) neither more nor less likely to plan for an

---

[3] Large is taken here to be larger than one standard deviation. We investigate below the actual magnitudes of these differences.

Table 3. Mean Score for Each Rated Behavior on Each of the Underlying Dimensions of Meaning Relevant to the College Student Identity

	Semantic Dimension			
Behavior	Academic Responsibility	Intellectualism	Sociability	Personal Assertiveness
Plan Graduate School	1.11	0.51	−0.86	−0.04
Plan Job	−0.62	0.11	−0.20	1.38
Difference*	1.73	0.40	−0.66	−1.42
Social Activities	−0.64	0.43	0.19	0.36
No Social Activities	0.61	−0.71	−1.48	−1.63
Difference*	−1.25	1.14	1.67	1.99

* The magnitude of the difference indicates the degree of relevance of the semantic dimension for the behavior in question.

advanced degree, but (b) more likely to participate in the measured student activities than college students with identities low on Sociability.

3. Persons whose identities as college students are high on Intellectualism will be (a) neither more nor less likely to plan for an advanced degree, but (b) more likely to participate in the measured student activities than college students with identities low on Intellectualism.

4. Persons whose identites as college students are high on Personal Assertiveness will be (a) less likely to plan for an advanced degree, and (b) more likely to participate in the measured student activities than college students with identities low on Personal Assertiveness.

Additional Measures

As control variables in the assessment of the relationship between student identities and role performance in the areas of educational plans and participation in social activities, two measures were included: *Father's Education* (in eight categories ranging from "eighth grade or less" to "graduate or professional school"), and *Family Income* (in six categories ranging from "less than $3,000" to "$25,000 or more"). It is well known that educational plans are affected by educational level of the parents, and it may well be that individual student identities are in part influenced by these same factors. Thus to assess the influence of identity on performance these background factors should be controlled. Additionally, participation in most of the social activities listed in the questionnaire requires

money, and persons with higher family incomes could be expected to participate more simply on that account. Again, income may also influence student identity and hence needs to be controlled in the analysis.

RESULTS

To test the above hypotheses about the nature of the link between student identities and various role "performances," each of the performance measures was regressed on the identity measures and on the two control variables (father's education and family income). These results are given in Table 4.

Beginning with the effects of college student identities on educational plans, the results of the analysis are entirely sup-

Table 4. Standardized Regression Coefficients from the Regression of the Performance Variables on the Identity and Background Variables

	Performance Variables	
	Educational Plans (N = 560)	Participation in Social Activities (N = 579)
Identity Dimensions		
Academic Responsibility	.21**	−.13**
Intellectualism	.06	.12**
Sociability	−.08	.19**
Personal Assertiveness	−.11*	.19**
Controls		
Father's Education	.12**	.05
Family Income	.01	.12**

* $p \le .05$.
** $p \le .01$.

portive of the hypotheses. Controlling for the two family background variables, students with identities high on Academic Responsibility and low on Personal Assertiveness are more likely than others to indicate plans to continue with their education beyond college. On the other hand, the identity dimensions of Intellectualism and Sociability, which were found to be less relevant to the meanings of educational plans in this context (see Table 3), are not significantly related to the dependent variable.

Turning to the analysis of participation in social activities, we again find results which support the main hypothesis. Controlling for family income and father's education, students whose identities are low on Academic Responsibility but high on Intellectualism, Sociability, and Personal Assertiveness are more likely to frequently engage in the kinds of social activities measured.

Three additional points should be noted, which argue against the alternative interpretation that because all the measures are done with the semantic differential, the observed results are due to a method effect rather than to any real substantive relationship of the sort hypothesized. The first point is that the meanings of the activities were measured on a different sample than the one in which the meanings of the student identities were measured. Second, not all of the dimensions of meaning of the student identities were significantly related to the performance measures—only those that were predicted on the basis of the relevance of the dimension (as measured on the auxiliary sample). And third, the direction of the relationship was not always the same across the different performance measures, but did correspond to the direction predicted on the basis of the measures of the meaning of the activity obtained in the auxiliary sample.

The second of these points, that some of the relationships were, as predicted, not significant, brings us to the corollary hypothesis that the strength of the relationship between identity and performance is a function of the relevance of the underlying dimensions of meaning to both the identity and the performance. We can take the magnitude of the differences reported in Table 3 as a scaled indication of the behavioral relevance of the identity dimensions. For example, since engaging and not engaging in social activities are very different on the dimension of Personal Assertiveness, we take this dimension of meaning as being very relevant for assessing performance in social activities.

With this we can test the corollary hypothesis by looking at the association between the magnitudes of these differences and the sizes of the regression coefficients reported in Table 4, which are indicators of the strength of the link between the various identity dimensions and the various performances. Considering all eight of these regression coefficients, the Pearsonian correlation between their magnitude and the degree of relevance of each of the semantic dimensions for the activity (the magnitudes of the differences reported in Table 3) is +0.99 ($p < 0.01$). The more relevant the activity to the underlying dimension of meaning, the greater is the strength of the link between identity and behavior.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It was suggested that the lack of research investigating the behavioral consequences of having some particular self-concept has been due to the lack of a clear understanding of the mechanisms that might be involved in translating a self-concept into a behavioral performance. It was hypothesized here that the link between identity and performance lies in the process of assessing each *on the same dimensions of meaning*. Through this process individuals monitor their own behavior in terms of the implied meaning of that behavior, where the relevant dimensions of meaning are those that distinguish the individual's role/identity from counter-role/identities. In order to be (some identity), one must act like (some identity). In order to not be (some other identity), one must not act like (that other identity). If being feminine, for example, *means* being tender and one defines oneself as being feminine, then one must act in ways that will be interpreted by oneself as well as by others as acting "tender" and

not acting "tough." In our case with the student roles and identities, if one has a student identity that is high in Academic Responsibility, then one should act in ways that have the same meaning. Although our findings are somewhat limited by the fact that they were obtained on cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data, this pattern of expected results was confirmed in our sample. Planning to go on to graduate school, and not participating in too many social activities, are both "performances" that have the meaning we called high Academic Responsibility, and they are performances in which individuals whose identities correspond with high Academic Responsibility are likely to engage.

Not only did the dimension of Academic Responsibility have an effect on these activities, but so did the other dimensions of the student identity. This finding is important for a number of reasons. Since most role/identities exist within a context of multiple counter-role/identities, there are multiple dimensions of meaning that are relevant in distinguishing among them. Similarly, activities are also assessed for their implied meanings along a number of dimensions. Consequently any activity or performance is multiply determined by any given identity that has more than one relevant underlying meaning. We have, therefore, a picture of the connections between identity and performance being manifold through the multiple meanings that any activity has, each being linked to one or more identities, with the strength of the links being determined by the relevance of the activity to the underlying dimension of meaning in question.

The multiple connections between identity and performance, however, should not be taken to indicate that performance is "overdetermined" by one's identities. Clearly opportunities for an activity must first exist. Family income, as we saw, does play a role in influencing the degree of participation in social activities. Similarly, parents' education influences the level of aspirations for post-B.A. education. These effects are independent of the kind of student identity held by any of our respondents. A more reasonable picture of the impact of identity on performance suggests that given an opportunity to engage in some activity or some set of activities, a choice must be made. Identities influence the choices made. The activity that results from the choice has meanings that correspond to, reinforce, and display the identity meanings of the individual. The choices can exist at the level of roles (cf. the discussion of role-selection by Backman and Secord, 1968), or at the level of items of behavior within roles, as demonstrated in the present research, or at even a more micro-level, where the choices exist in the *manner in which* any activity is performed. Viewed in this way, an identity is like a compass helping us steer a course of interaction in a sea of social meaning.

REFERENCES

Alexander, N. C., and C. W. Knight
  1971 "Structured identities and social psychological experimentation." Sociometry 34:65–82.
Backman, C. W., and P. F. Secord
  1968 "The self and role selection." Pp. 289–296 in C. Gordon and K. J. Gergen (eds.), The Self in Social Interaction. New York: Wiley.
Borgatta, E.
  1969 "The structure of personality characteristics." Pp. 246–274 in E. Borgatta (ed.), Social Psychology: Readings and Perspective. Chicago: Rand McNally.
Burke, P. J.
  1980 "The self: Measurement implications from a symbolic interactionist perspective." Social Psychology Quarterly 43:18–29.
Burke, P. J., and J. Tully
  1977 "The measurement of role identity." Social Forces 55:881–897.
Coopersmith, S.
  1959 "A method for determining types of self-esteem." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 59:87–94.
  1967 The Antecedents of Self-Esteem. San Francisco: Wilt Freeman.
Cottrell, L. S.
  1950 "Some neglected problems in social psychology." American Sociological Review 15:705–712.
Foote, N. N.
  1951 "Identification as the basis for a theory of motivation." American Sociological Review 26:14–21.
Goffman, E.
  1959 The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
Gordon, C.
  1968 "Self conceptions: Configurations of content." Pp. 115–154 in C. Gordon and K. J. Gergen (eds.), The Self in Social Interaction. New York: Wiley.

1976 "Development of Evaluated Role Iden-
     tities." Pp. 405–434 in A. Inkeles, J. Cole-
     man, and N. Smelser (eds.), Annual Review
     of Sociology. Vol. 2. Palo Alto, CA: Annual
     Reviews.
Heise, D. R.
  1977a "Group dynamics and attitude-behavior re-
     lations." Sociological Methods and Re-
     search 5:259–288.
  1977b "Social action as the control of affect." Be-
     havioral Science 22:163–177.
  1979 Understanding Events. Cambridge: Cam-
     bridge University Press.
Lindesmith, A. R., and A. L. Strauss
  1956 Social Psychology. New York: Dryden.
McCall, G. J., and J. L. Simmons
  1966 Identities and Interactions. New York:
     Free Press.
McGuire, W.
  1968 "The nature of attitudes and attitude
     change." Pp. 136–314 in G. Lindzey and E.
     Aronson (eds.), The Handbook of Social
     Psychology. Vol. 3. Reading, MA:
     Addison-Wesley.
Mead, G. H.
  1934 Mind, Self, and Society. Chicago: Univer-
     sity of Chicago Press.
Merton, R. K.
  1957 Social Theory and Social Structure. Re-
     vised and enlarged 2nd edition. Glencoe,
     IL: Free Press.
Osgood, C. E., G. J. Succi, and P. H. Tannebaum
  1957 The Measurement of Meaning. Urbana, IL:
     University of Illinois Press.
Powers, W. T.
  1975 Behavior: The Control of Perception.
     Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.
Reitzes, D. C., and P. J. Burke
  1980 "College student identity: Measurement
     and implications." Pacific Sociological Re-
     view 23:46–66.
Rosenberg, M.
  1965 Society and the Adolescent Self-Image.
     Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
  un- "Beyond self-esteem: The neglected issues
  publ. in self-concept research." Paper presented

at the Annual Meetings of the American
     Sociological Association, 1976.
  1979 Conceiving the Self. New York: Basic
     Books.
Schwartz, M. and S. Stryker
  1970 Deviance, Selves and Others. Washington,
     D.C.: American Sociological Association
     (Rose Monograph Series).
Shrauger, J. S., and T. J. Schoeneman
  1979 "Symbolic interactionist view of self-
     concept: Through the looking glass darkly."
     Psychological Bulletin 86:549–573.
Stone, G. P.
  1962 "Appearance and the self." Pp. 86–118 in A.
     Rose (ed.), Human Behavior and Social
     Processes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Stryker, S.
  1968 "Identity salience and role performance."
     Journal of Marriage and the Family 4:558–
     564.
  1980 "Toward an adequate social psychology of
     the self." Contemporary Sociology: A Jour-
     nal of Reviews 9:383–385.
Turner, R.
  1968 "The self-conception in social interaction."
     Pp. 93–106 in C. Gorden and K. J. Gergen
     (eds.), The Self in Social Interaction. New
     York: Wiley.
  1979 "The dynamics of a general illusion." Sci-
     ence 204(18, May):727–728.
Walster, E.
  1970 "The effect of self-esteem on liking for dates
     of various social desirability." Journal of
     Clinical Psychology 24:40–45.
Weinstein, E. A.
  1969 "The development of interpersonal compe-
     tence." Pp. 753–775 in D. A. Goslin (ed.),
     Handbook of Socialization Theory and Re-
     search. Chicago: Rand McNally.
Wells, L. E.
  1978 "Theories of deviance and the self-
     concept." Social Psychology 41:189–204.
Wylie, R.
  1974 The Self Concept. Vol. 1. Lincoln: Univer-
     sity of Nebraska Press.