# Identity Salience and Identity Importance in Identity Theory

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## ABSTRACT

*This study addressed persistent uncertainty between the concepts known as psychological centrality and identity salience. Researchers continue to combine these two distinct concepts in a unidimensional structure despite indications that they are separate self-processes. The continued conflation of these two self-processes leads to confusion and hinders the clarity and meaning of social psychological work on the self. Results of the current study find that identity salience and psychological centrality are separate. When people were given a behavioral choice between their two most important role-identities they did not always choose the identity that they identified as most important to their self-concept.*

## INTRODUCTION

A great deal of research has examined the multiplicity of the self; however, questions about the self-structure persist. Identity Theory is a popular paradigm for examining these questions. Identity Theory emphasizes roles and role-taking within symbolic interaction, stressing that roles develop into role-identities (Merolla et al. 2012). The amount of influence a role-identity has on a person is defined by commitment. There are two dimensions of role-identity commitment. The first is interactional commitment, "which is the number of social relationships associated with a given [role] identity" (Serpe 1987: 45), also called *extensiveness*. The second dimension is affective commitment, "the 'importance' of others to whom one relates through occupancy of a given position" (Stryker 1980:81), or *intensiveness*. Burke and Reitzes (1991) summarize commitment as a person's motivation to maintain congruity between their perceptions of self and feedback received from the social world. In sum, commitment reflects the relative cost of giving up or losing an identity.

A notion of "importance" also gets captured by the terms prominence (McCall and Simmons 1966) and psychological centrality (Rosenberg 1979). This idea of importance is, "the significance of a particular component [identity and] its location in the self-concept structure—whether it is central or peripheral, cardinal or secondary, a major or minor part of the self" (Rosenberg 1979:18). [1] Identity Theorists are slowly integrating this conception of importance into their work (see Reitzes and Mutran 2002). However, uncertainty about the placement of importance within Identity Theory remains (Brenner 2011). Uncertainty is at least partially

attributable to overlap among each concept. Based on the operationalization of commitment importance overlaps directly with *intensiveness* because intensiveness is the "emotional significance of the others implicated with one in a given social network" (Ervin and Stryker 2001:34) and "the 'importance' of others to whom one relates…" (Stryker 1980:81). From Stryker's perspective, it is hard to imagine a role-identity consisting of people deemed as important (intensive commitment) while the associated identity remains unimportant (psychologically central). It is also difficult to imagine, from a role-identity perspective, an identity important to the self in Rosenberg's terms while judging the people connected to the identity as unimportant to the self. The linkage between intensiveness and importance is largely unexplored. The nature of the connection between these self-processes raises interesting questions [2]; however, an empirical test of the relationship between intensiveness and importance was beyond the scope of the current study.

Identity Theory also centers on the notion of salience. Identity salience refers to the likelihood that a given identity will be active across situations. [3] Identities get ranked in a hierarchy. Identities that are higher on the salience hierarchy are more likely to be enacted. The structure of the hierarchy directly relates to the elements of commitment. Greater identity commitment results in greater identity salience. The question at issue here is whether or not the importance (subjective self-ranking) of an identity is operationally independent of its salience (likelihood of enactment). Since identity salience reflects commitment, including intensiveness, an empirical demonstration of the operational independence of importance and salience is tricky.

Each concept implies a level of self-awareness. Psychologists have consistently demonstrated that self-awareness impacts the self-concept and related attitudes and behavior (Hutchinson and Skinner 2007; Silvia and Duval 2001). For instance, a person must be aware of an identity for that part of the self-concept to be deemed important. Self-awareness is a conscious attention focused inward toward the self including evaluation of the self, emotional reaction to the self, and a motivating or driving component arising from the inward reflection (Wicklund 1979).

*The Conflation of Terms*

Gecas and Seff (1990) conducted a study operationalizing the concept of psychological centrality as a person's tendency to organize and differentiate the self-concept in terms of relative importance. The definition that they adopted for "centrality" came from Rosenberg (1979), but they also included Stryker's (1980) concept of identity salience as essentially the same process. Combining importance and salience in this way is a common convention for dealing with the correlation between these two self-processes (cf. Hoelter 1985; Simon 1997; Thoits 2012).

Stryker and Serpe (1994) directly tested the distinct nature of identity salience and importance. However, results of their study were mixed, "perhaps salience and centrality operate in equivalent fashion when actors, by whatever process, become aware of the salience of given identities" (Stryker and Serpe 1994:34). This finding supports the work of psychologists' cited above who argue that self-awareness affects the processes of the self-concept. For this reason, self-awareness was included as a control in the current study. Following their comment about awareness Stryker and Serpe noted the difficulty of conceptualizing the conditions under which

importance and salience remain independent of one another (see Marcussen, Ritter and Safron 2004 and Owens and Serpe 2003 for similar results).

Brenner has recently argued that the context of symbolic interaction can confound these concepts, "…importance and salience may be situationally concordant, [but] they may also be situation-ally orthogonal or even opposed" (Brenner 2011:104). Gecas and Seff (1990) conceived of salience and importance as the same process based on a person's interaction with the immediate social structure. What Brenner emphasizes is the idea that the context of symbolic interaction can combine or separate salience and importance. This idea complements the findings of Stryker and Serpe arguing that interaction and awareness influence these processes (1994:34).

Most recently Thoits has defined salience as the "subjective importance or value that persons attach to the various roles that they accept as self-defining" (2012:362). She states that her conception of salience aligns with Rosenberg's (1979) notion of psychological centrality, "…with the terms *salience* and *importance* used interchangeably" (Thoits 2012:362, emphasis in original). Thoits also acknowledges that this is a break from Stryker and Serpe's (1994) recommendations. Thoits's article continues the tradition of combining the processes of identity salience and identity importance in a unidimensional structure.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The current study tested two research questions: 1) what is the nature of the relationship between importance and salience and 2) are salience and importance distinct self-processes?

> *Hypothesis 1*: Importance will be predictive of salience. Identities considered more important to the self will be more salient.

> *Hypothesis 2*: Despite the relationship theorized in Hypothesis 1, given a behavioral choice, not all respondents will choose to enact their most important role-identity.

## DATA, METHODS, AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data came from 1,362 self-reported surveys administered at a large four-year state run university and a neighboring junior college. [3] Participants were given clickers enabling them to quickly and anonymously respond to survey items and a small slip of paper divided into two equal cells with watermarks reading *Role 1* and *Role 2*. Prior to the start of the survey a demonstration of the anonymous feature of the software was given. Data gathering included a protocol for researchers to pause and emphasize instructional details prior to question delivery. Instructions and questions were also displayed on an overhead projector (see the Appendix for more on the methodology).

*Outcome Variable*

Salience was modeled as a logit dependent variable based on the binary distribution of this item. The purpose for specifying salience as an outcome was to investigate the conditions under which importance and salience remain independent by asking respondents to make a behavioral choice between their two most important (self-reported) role-identities. Requiring respondents to make a

choice between these two important role-identities heightens self-awareness, making a test of the independent effects of importance and salience possible (Stryker and Serpe 1994:34).

*Predictors*

Measures of each of the Identity Theory concepts were controlled for including a measure of *self-awareness*. [5]

Despite the Identity Theory tradition of including age, race, and sex as controls (cf. Burke 2006) based on the survey procedures relying on open self-reporting no theoretical rationale existed for variation based on these common controls (Spector and Brannick 2011). [6]

The analysis began with a Principle Components Analysis (PCA) following the work of Burke and Reitzes (1991). Next, Serpe's (1987) definitions of the primary Identity Theory concepts guided a Principle Axis Factor (PAF). A (reduced) scaling measure of Cronbach's alpha was also run. [7] Stryker and Serpe (1994) and Gecas and Seff (1990) ran a series of correlations for each of the role-identities that they examined; the current study adopted the correlation analysis and followed this with logistic regression modeling. A logistic model provides the log odds or probability of selecting one identity over the other as a linear combination of the predictors in the model. Finally, a chi-square test of independence between importance and salience of *Role 1* was run as the final test of the difference between importance and salience. All scaled measures came from factor scale scores (Wu 2007). Factor scores created a linear composite with optimally weighted values for the observed variables (DiStefano, Zhu and Mîndrilă 2009, Russell 2002).

## FINDINGS

Table 1 presents results of the PCA and PAF on these data. Loadings confirm the presence of four main constructs when both Role 1 and Role 2 are included. Varimax and Promax rotation were both run to assess the correlation between components; results suggest an oblique structure.

Table 1. Dimension Reduction & Factor Analysis of Identity Theory Measures

| Component | Exploratory Factor Analysis 1 | | Exploratory Factor Analysis 2 | | Principle Axis Factoring* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Xs** | | | | | | | | |
| Extensiveness (R1) | | | | | | .205 | | |
| Intensiveness (R1) | .706 | | .725 | | | .706* | | |
| Importance (R1) | .630 | | .625 | | | .601* | | |
| Awareness (R1) | | .304 | | .312 | | | | .599*** |
| Awareness (R1) | | .866 | | .876 | | | -.601 | .421*** |
| Cost (R1) | .260 | -.235 | .224 | -.214 | | .256 | .322 | |
| Extensiveness (R2) | | | | | | | .226 | |
| Intensiveness (R2) | | | | | .686** | | | |
| Importance (R2) | | | | | .689** | | .212 | |

Varimax (with Kaiser Normalization).

Promax (with Kaiser Normalization).
Component Correlation Matrix

| 1.000 | -.280 |
|---|---|
| -.280 | 1.000 |

*CFA included Role 1 & 2 | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy .605 ($p = .001$)

Coefficient of Alienation in all reductions = .20

R1 = Role 1, R2 = Role 2 | *Role 1 Alpha between Intensiveness and Importance = .68 **Role 2 Alpha = .63

*** Awareness Alpha = .55

Component loadings in Table 1 show that the hypothesized linkage between *Intensiveness* and *Importance* was present in these data. However, despite the connection, in order to test the independent effects the items were retained as separate theoretical constructs.

Two items representing self-awareness loaded together, the first measure captured the inward reflection inherent in self-awareness and the second captured the emotional component of self-awareness. The factor scores for these measures are hereafter referred to as *Awareness*.

Table 2 provides zero-order correlations and a further test of construct validity. The relationship between *Intensiveness* and *Salience* in Table 2 supported previous research on Identity Theory: as intensiveness increased related to Role 1 *Salience* increased (.175) and as intensive commitment increased for Role 2 the salience of Role 1 decreased (-.194).

The correlations between *Salience* and *Importance* in Table 2 show that as the importance of Role 1 increased the salience of this role-identity increased (.119) and as the importance of Role 2 increased the Salience of Role 1 decreased (-.153). The relationship between intensiveness and importance for Role 1 produced a positive correlation of .439 and for Role 2 a positive

correlation of .502. These correlations were the strongest present in these data.

Table 2. Zero Order Correlations of Identity Theory Measures

| | Exten (R1) | Inten (R1) | Impor (R1) | Exten (R2) | Inten (R2) | Impor (R2) | Cost (R1) | Aware (R1) | Salience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extensiveness (R1) | 1.000 | | | | | | | | |
| Intensiveness (R1) | .048† | 1.000 | | | | | | | |
| Importance (R1) | .132*** | .439*** | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| Extensiveness (R2) | .117*** | .014 | .048† | 1.000 | | | | | |
| Intensiveness (R2) | .081** | .128*** | .158*** | .088*** | 1.000 | | | | |
| Importance (R2) | .093*** | .160*** | .249*** | .122*** | .502*** | 1.000 | | | |
| Cost (R1) | .065* | .200*** | .179*** | .034 | .013 | .122*** | 1.000 | | |
| Awareness (R1) | .069* | .082** | .195*** | .105*** | .034 | .120*** | .179*** | 1.000 | |
| Salience | -.008 | .175*** | .119*** | -.054* | -.194*** | -.153*** | .104*** | .041 | 1.000 |
| | R1 = Role 1, R2 = Role 2 \| † P ≤ .10 / * P ≤ 0.05 / ** P ≤ 0.01 / ***P ≤ 0.001 | | | | | | | | |

Table 3 presents the following logistic regression models: Model 1A was a nested model minus importance and awareness. Model 1B introduced *Importance*. Model 1C introduced *Awareness* and Model 1C – OR displays the Odds Ratios (OR) for Model 1C.

Results again supported previous research on Identity Theory. Looking at the results of controls in Model 1C – OR, as intensive commitment for Role 1 increased the odds of selecting Role 1 given a choice went up by 1.497 or 50%. One unit change in *Intensiveness* for Role 2 decreased the odds of selecting Role 1 as most salient by .59 or 59%. Extensive commitment was not significantly related to salience, but this may be due to the operationalization of this measure.

Cost was marginally significant. As the cost of giving up the most important role-identity increased there was a 12% increase in the salience of that identity. Table 3 also displays the results of the test of the first hypothesis. *Importance* was a significant predictor of *Salience* and in the hypothesized direction. Again, looking at Model 1C – OR, a one unit increase in importance of Role 1 produced an OR of 1.671 or a 67% increase in the odds of selecting Role 1 given a choice. A one unit increase in importance for Role 2 decreased the likelihood of selecting Role 1 over Role 2 by .519 or 52%. This finding supports the first hypothesis arguing that importance will be predictive of salience.

Table 3: Logit Regression Model Estimates of Identity Theory Measures Predicting Role-Identity Salience

| | Model 1A | | Model 1B | | Model 1C | | Model 1C – OR | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Coef. | SE | Coef. | SE | Coef. | SE | OR | SE |
| Extensiveness (R1) | .040 | .095 | .015 | .098 | .021 | .101 | 1.021 | .103 |
| Intensiveness (R1) | .454*** | .069 | .340*** | .075 | .403*** | .078 | 1.497*** | .117 |
| Cost (R1) | .136* | .061 | .129* | .064 | .117† | .066 | 1.124† | .074 |
| Extensiveness (R2) | -.085 | .077 | -.059 | .080 | -.004 | .086 | .996 | .085 |
| Intensiveness (R2) | -.620*** | .081 | -.536*** | .093 | -.528*** | .095 | .590*** | .056 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Importance (R1) | | | .575*** | .130 | .513*** | .136 | 1.671*** | .227 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Importance (R2) | | | -.557*** | .143 | -.655*** | .150 | .519*** | .078 |
| Aware (R1) | | | | | -.064 | .046 | .938 | .044 |
| Intercept | .740 | .766 | .816 | .906 | .962* | .967 | 2.616* | 2.528 |

R1 = Role 1, R2 = Role 2 | † $P \leq .10$ / * $P \leq .05$ / ** $P \leq .01$ / ***$P \leq .001$

Table 4 displays the results of the final test. *Importance* was analyzed using Item 3 for role-identity 1 and *Salience* was measured using Item 7 (see the Appendix). If importance and salience are the same the chi-square test of independence should be non-significant showing that the probability of selecting Role 1 given a choice is the same as its self-reported importance.

### Table 4. Chi-Square Test of Difference Between Salience and Importance

| | | Role Choice Between Role 1 & Role 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Role 1 | Role 2 | Total |
| Role 1 Importance | Strongly Disagree | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| | Disagree | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| | Neither | 11 | 14 | 25 |
| | Agree | 89 | 142 | 231 |
| | Strongly Agree | 647 | 402 | 1049 |
| Total | | 761 | 569 | 1330 |

| | Test Statistic | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 43.287[a] | 4 | $P = .001$ |
| Likelihood Ratio | 42.931 | 4 | $P = .001$ |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 18.717 | 1 | $P = .001$ |
| N of Valid Cases | 1330 | | |

61.7% of respondents strongly agreed that Role 1 was very important to them and selected this role-identity in the face of a salience challenge; however, 38.3% selected Role 2. The difference was statistically significant, Chi-square = 43.287 (4df), *p* = .001. Despite the overlap between these concepts these data show that not all respondents chose to enact their most important role-identity, given a choice. This finding supported the second research question and hypothesis arguing that salience and importance are distinct self-processes.

**DISCUSSION**

This study set out to address some unresolved questions regarding the structure of the multiple self. Results indicated that identities considered most important to the self-concept were chosen by respondents more often in the face of a salience challenge. This study also demonstrated that salience and importance are distinct self-processes. Treating these self-processes as theoretically

discrete is important for empirical work in social psychology in order to account for the distinct (though obviously correlated) effects that each process has on the self. Lacking separate treatment these processes likely confound one another during a statistical analysis. Hopefully these findings motivate further conceptual and measurement clarity. [8]

**LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Contemporary social psychological theory argues for two additional levels of identity formation. At the most micro level the *personal-identity* and at the macro group level the *social-identity*. It is not clear that the findings reported would be the same for other modality of identity. For instance, how would *Extensiveness* be operationalized at the level of a personal-identity, would it even apply? On the other hand, how does the broad nature of a social-identity influence self-awareness or the perceived commitment/cost associated with an identity formulated at this macro level? These are questions that still need attention (Burke and Stets 2009).

Additional parts of the self-concept not considered in this study are things like self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-authenticity, and other biological or emotional stimuli that are internalized within the self. Future research would be strengthened by the inclusion of additional self-concept pieces as they relate to salience and importance as well as a longitudinal analysis of how these processes change over time.

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# ENDNOTES

[1] The term *importance* is used for the remainder of this manuscript and refers to the processes often called *psychological centrality* and/or *prominence*.

[2] Part of the limitation comes from Identity Theory's exclusive focus on role-identities. It is conceivable that a person with a social-identity could rate the good of the group (i.e., the importance of the people/collective) as more important than their social-identity. Work on social movements, values, and altruism could be a promising lead in this direction. It is also imaginable that a personal-identity could be viewed as acutely important, a level of importance minimizing the importance of the people surrounding that person. Work on selfishness, narcissism, and self-entitlement is a direction for this possibility.

[3] Salience also includes two levels of conflict, cognitive and behavioral conflict. Multiple identities can be relevant in a singular situation. Cognitive conflict occurs when actors must decide which identity to enact. See Hage, Jerald and Charles H. Powers. 1992. Post-Industrial Lives : Roles and Relationships in the 21st Century. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. See also Merton, R. K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." American Sociological Review 3(October):672-82, and Stryker, Sheldon. 1978. "Status Inconsistency and Role Conflict." Annual Review of Sociology 4:57-90. Behavioral conflict occurs when competing identities require different behaviors. See Smith-Lovin, Lynn. 2001. "Role-Identities, Action and Emotion: Parallel Processing and the Production of Mixed Emotions." in Self and Identity: Personal, Social, and Symbolic, edited by K. Yoshihisa and M. Foddy. New York: Erlbaum. This conflict is referred to as identity competition. The battleground of this struggle is the salience hierarchy itself.

[4] A sub-goal of this research was to explore ways to use survey methods without overtly cueing identities, thereby fundamentally biasing self-report results. See Brenner, Philip S. 2011. "Identity Importance and the Overreporting of Religious Service Attendance: Multiple Imputation of Religious Attendance Using the American Time Use Study and the General Social Survey." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 50(1):103-15.

[5] One of the limitations present in the current study is the operationalization of Extensiveness as time in role-identity. In order to complete surveys within the limits of a single class session (as short as 50-minutes) items were carefully constructed to achieve the greatest amount of information possible within a limited timeframe. The directions preceding Extensiveness instructed respondents to think of roles as positions within social structures that are organized based on obligations and relationships with other people. Respondents were then given a question asking them to reflect on the amount of time they spent within these role-identities. Intuitively, greater time should equal greater interaction with significant others. However, it is not possible to know the number of people interacted with in a given role-identity. This is a limitation of the measure of extensiveness used in this study.

[6] This should not be read as an argument that no variation exists between role-identities and these common control variables. Rather, because the outcome variable of interest is salience predicted by any imagined role-identity it would be an arbitrary exercise in the case of this study to include these controls merely for the sake of including a "control."

[7] The measure of "alpha" used is a measure of association between only two items. It is a measure of correlation or relationship between the items and does provide a measure of strength, but not in the typical manner proposed by Cronbach. See Hulin, C., R. Cudeck, R. Netemeyer, W. R. Dillon, R. McDonald and W. Bearden. 2001. "Measurement." Journal of Consumer Psychology 10(1 & 2):55-69.

[8] At the 2013 Annual Meeting of the *American Sociological Association* Phillip Brenner, Richard Serpe, and Sheldon Stryker presented a paper testing similar hypotheses as are presented in this paper. Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker were limited to investigating one academic role-identity, the science identity. The current study adopted a modified version of the methodology behind the Twenty Statements Test to include a broader range of possible role-identities. See Brenner, Philip S., Richard T. Serpe and Sheldon Stryker. 2013. "An Empirical Test of the Causal Order of Prominence and Salience in Identity Theory." Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, 2013, New York.

**APPENDIX: SURVEY ITEMS WITH EXPLANATIONS OF SURVEY PROCEDURES**

Following consent and voluntary participation requirements the following statement began the survey:

> *"Think of the role that you feel is the <u>most</u> important to the way you think of yourself. A role is a position you have that includes relationships and obligations with others (e.g., student, teacher, worker, employer, mother, father, son, daughter, friend, etc.). Write this role down."*

A pause was then taken as the researchers looked around the room to ensure that participants were writing down the name of this role-identity. Researchers also emphasized that the identity written down should truly be the one they considered most important to their sense of self. Participants were instructed to look at and focus on this role when they were asked questions relating to this role-identity.

This was the first question given on an 86 item survey. Respondents were free to choose any role-identity that they felt/thought was most important to their self-concept (Gecas, 1973; Kuhn and McPartland 1954; Schwirian, 1964). Allowing respondents to self-report without directive cuing represents an adaptation of the methodology behind The 20 Statements Test. After both role-identities had been written by respondents they were asked to categorize each role-identity.

Respondents were next asked a series of questions to investigate commitment to this role.

> *Item 1.* How often do you spend time actively involved in this role (i.e., doing things associated with the role)?
>
> *Item 2.* The people I associate with in this role are very important to me.
>
> *Item 3.* This role is very important to me.

Respondents were next asked to, "*Think of another/different role that you feel is similarly important or as close to the first as possible to the way you think of yourself.*" Once again the definition of a role was given and respondents were asked to write down the name of the role and another pause was taken to ensure that respondents wrote it down. After Role 2 was written down and all instructions given items 1 through 3 were repeated for the second role-identity.

Table 5 displays the distribution of role-identities that people self-reported. Upon first glance it appears that the example role-identities provided on the survey may have biased the results, e.g., the "Academic" role-identity had a high frequency for *Role 1* and the pattern is fairly consistent for *Role 2.*This frequency seems high when thinking about a general population of people; however, the majority of participants in this study were full-time students, many of whom live on a campus that is surrounded by a small college town and is geographically isolated by a 100-mile radius of farming and agriculture. During semi-structured interviews—for a separate research project—using this same sample population it was clear that many respondents did in fact feel that their student role-identity was their most important identity. However, despite an intuitive

explanation for the outcome it is impossible to know if the example roles presented on the survey item itself had a sub-conscious influence on the role-identities selected. This is an inherent limitation of presenting a definition with example role-identities to respondents.

Table 5. Respondents Self-Reported Role 1 and Role 2 Categories

| | | Role 1 | | Role 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Role | Academic | 455 | 33.4 | 271 | 19.9 |
| Name: | Worker | 64 | 4.7 | 115 | 8.4 |
| | Family/Romantic | 602 | 44.2 | 753 | 55.3 |
| | Athlete | 30 | 2.2 | 26 | 1.9 |
| | Extracurricular | 28 | 2.1 | 37 | 2.7 |
| | Religious | 36 | 2.6 | 23 | 1.7 |
| | Other | 125 | 9.2 | 113 | 8.3 |
| | Total | 1340 | 98.4 | 1338 | 98.2 |
| Missing | System | 22 | 1.6 | 24 | 1.8 |
| | Total | 1362 | 100.0 | 1362 | 100.0 |

21 cases or 1.54% of participants selected "other" for both role-identities.

Respondents were then instructed and asked the following:

> *"To answer the following questions use the role that you listed as the most important to the way you think of yourself. Use the name of this role to fill in the blank space of the next three (3) questions."*

> *Item 4*. Being a __role__ is something I rarely even think about.

> *Item 5*. I would feel a sense of loss if I were forced to give up being a __role__.

> *Item 6*. I really don't have any clear feelings about being a __role__.

Response options on Item 1 ranged from 1-Once a Year to 6-Daily with a seventh category for Don't Know/Refuse. Items 2-6 were Likert from 5-Strongly Agree to 1-Strongly Disagree with a middle category 3-Neither and a sixth category 6-Don't Know/Refuse.

Item 1 addressed extensive commitment, or extensiveness, the amount of interaction within a role. Item 2 addressed intensive commitment, or intensiveness, the importance of people connected to the role-identity. Item 3 addressed importance, the subjective feeling of a role-identity's importance. Items 4 and 6 addressed self-awareness reflecting cognitive and emotional awareness of the role-identities identified. Item 5, a global measure of commitment, measured the cost associated with losing a role-identity (Cost).

As Stryker and Serpe (1994) note versions of these items have been used repeatedly to address both salience and importance, however, nothing about these items directly addressed role-

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identity choice, how likely it is that a given identity is enacted across various situations (i.e., salience).

At this point in the survey a new measure of salience was introduced designed explicitly to account for the salience of the two role-identities respondents' identified.

> *"Take a moment to look at the two roles that you have written down [a pause is taken here and researchers look around the room to emphasize the importance of physically looking at the slip of paper]. If a situation arises requiring you to make a choice between the two roles with one would you choose? For example, you have to attend a family dinner however if you go to dinner you won't be able to study for a test that you have to take the next day, which do you choose? Situations may vary, but the point is to try and imagine, in general, which role you would choose if you could only pick one."*

> *Item 7.* It may be difficult to choose, but please make a choice between the roles. If a situation requires you to make a choice between being a ___role 1___ or a ___role 2___ and you can only do one at that time, I would keep my commitment to: Role 1 or Role 2.

At this point, cueing of participants toward a socially desirable response was minimal given they had been asked very few questions, and researchers stressed that respondents should write down any role-identity that came to mind best answering the survey item. The survey was designed to allow respondents freedom during self-reporting, to avoid cueing. Therefore, both obligatory and voluntary role-identities get represented. Research has demonstrated that behavioral differences are possible based on distinct modalities of identity. Despite this inevitable limitation, the phrasing of Item 7 requires a choice to be made between two competing identities. For more on this point see Thoits (2003).

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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