

# **RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MULTIPLE IDENTITIES \***

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## **Abstract**

One question that has been only minimally examined in Identity Theory concerns the relationship among the several identities that any individual holds. This paper examines the manner in which the multiple identities that an individual holds are related to each other and the consequences of that relationship for behavior, the identities involved, and identity functioning. Eight general principles (hypotheses) are presented outlining a program for future research. This program is initiated with a test of one of the hypotheses through an examination of the relationship between a task leadership identity and a social-emotional (SE) leadership identity. Using data from four-person problem-solving groups, I examine the influence of these identities on task and SE leadership performance over time under different structural conditions. While prior work has emphasized shared meanings as the basis for a relationship, I find that both structural factors and performance factors also shape the relationship.

## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

It is almost a truism to say that people have multiple identities. Certainly, it is this idea to which William James (1890) was referring when he said that each person has as many selves as others with whom they interact. Having noted that, however, very little has been theorized or investigated about the way in which these multiple identities relate to each other. Most identity research focuses on one or another identity that people have without asking the question about how those identities relate to each other or what the implication is for understanding behavior that such behavior may function to verify more than one identity. I begin with a brief review of work that has begun to address these issues more directly, as well as work that, while not addressing such issues directly, nevertheless makes an indirect contribution to our understanding.

In doing this, I distinguish between two different issues in the relationship between and among multiple identities. These two issues have to do with what might be termed the internal and external foci that have developed within identity theory (Stryker and Burke 2000). The external focus addresses how the multiple identities that an individual has are tied into the complexities of the social structure(s) in which the individual is embedded. It is also concerned with the impact of social structure on the salience and activation<sup>1</sup> as well commitment<sup>2</sup> to the multiple identities. From this perspective, the

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<sup>1</sup> The salience of an identity is its probability of being activated in a situation (Stryker 1980). Activation refers to the condition in which an identity is actively engaged in the self-verification process as opposed to being latent and inactive.

<sup>2</sup> Commitment is the strength of the tie that an individual has to an identity. There are really two sources to commitment, as Stryker has made clear (Stryker and Serpe 1982). The first is the number of persons to which one is tied by holding a given identity (extensive commitment) and the other is the emotional attachment to the others to which one is tied. The overall commitment is a combination (perhaps product) of these two forms, and represents the strength of the forces the influence people to maintain congruence

relationship between multiple identities is an issue of the link between social structure and the individual. The internal focus attends to issues of how the multiple identities that an individual has function together within the self, or within the overall self-verification process, and the implications of the self-verification process for the multiple identities held. From this perspective the relationship between multiple identities is an issue of the mechanisms by which all identities function within the self and the entire perceptual control system of an individual.

Identities are the meanings that individuals hold for themselves -- what it means to be who they are. These identities have bases in being members of groups (social identities), having certain roles (role identities), or being the unique biological entities that they are (personal identities). I am a member of the university faculty (social identity), a professor (role identity), and a person with high standards (personal identity). What it means to me to be a faculty member, a professor, and a person with high standards are the contents of these three identities that I have. In what follows I will not be dealing with the third basis of identity, that is the person, but will focus on those identities that are tied more directly to elements of the social structure: groups and roles. I begin the discussion with the internal focus, that is, on the internal mechanisms that are involved when considering multiple identities within the perceptual control system because what happens at that level influences the way in which the multiple identities manifest themselves within the larger social structure.

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between the meanings in their identity standards and self-relevant meanings in the situation (Burke and Reitzes 1991).

### *Issues of Multiple Identities Within the Perceptual Control System*

When considering the relationship between identities within the hierarchical perceptual control system in which all identities are thought to reside, the issues include how multiple identities relate to each other, how they are switched on or off, and when they are on, how the person manages to maintain congruence between perceptions and standards for each identity. Included in this last part are questions of what happens when behavior cannot maintain perceptions congruent with their standards.

Beginning with the idea of how identities relate to each other, most prior work on the relationship between multiple identities has focused on the way in which identities do or do not share meanings. For example, Linville's (1985, 1987) self-complexity theory dealt with the idea that individuals with more complex selves were better buffered from situational stresses. The complexity of the self was defined as the number of "distinct self-aspects" that one has. Distinct self-aspects are roles, relationships, traits, or activities that do not share attributes or meanings. In this way, problems that develop with respect to the attributes or meanings that relate to one "identity" do not spill over to others.

Related to this is the idea that multiple identities may have beneficial effects in their multiplicity rather than how they do or do not relate to each other (Thoits 1983, 1986). This hypothesis has received mixed support, especially relative to an alternative suggestion that it is particular combinations of identities that are more influential in terms of increasing or decreasing stress or well being (Reitzes and Mutran 1995).

Stets (1995) looked at the relationship between gender role identity, a mastery personal identity suggesting that the two are related through common dimension of meaning concerning the degree to which they control aspects of their environment. This idea of relating identities by the degree to which they share meanings was also put

forward by Hoelter (1985) in his proposed methodology for conceptually linking identities in semantic space as defined by the “universal” dimensions of evaluation, potency, and activity (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957). This idea is also at the heart of affect control theory (Heise 1979; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988) in which identities not only shift the meanings in the situation but are also activated, and sometimes chosen to fit the meanings of the situations. Deaux (1992, 1993) also proposed this idea of common characteristics among social and personal identities. She used the concept of common “traits,” though one could substitute the idea of common meanings with the same effect.

Shared among all of these researchers is the idea that identities that have common meanings are likely to be activated together whenever those meanings are present in the situation, and that multiple identities might work together in the self-verification process to control those meanings in the situation. Additionally, Deaux suggests that identities that share many meanings are located near the top of a prominence hierarchy and may work together to control the meanings of identities lower in the hierarchy.

I develop this idea of the hierarchy of control of meanings from the point of view of identity control theory. For this, we need to understand the hierarchical nature of the overall perceptual control system. The overall perceptual control system is composed of an interlocking set of individual control systems at multiple levels (Tsushima and Burke 1999).<sup>3</sup> At the “lowest” level, outputs of the individual control systems are behaviors in the situation. These are illustrated in Figure 1 with control systems two and three. The figure illustrates these outputs as being merged since there is a single individual engaged

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<sup>3</sup> This hierarchical organization of identities in the overall perceptual control system should not be confused with the salience hierarchy of identities (Stryker 1968). The latter refers to the relative likelihood that identities will be activated.

in behavior, although the behavior is guided by multiple individual control systems. This implies that the behavior of an individual must “satisfy” several individual control systems simultaneously by altering the situation in ways that change the self-relevant meanings perceived by all of the different individual control systems.

(Figure 1 About Here)

What is the relationship between these control systems and identities? The answer to this is partly conceptual. If we think of an identity as the set of all meanings and expectations held for oneself in terms of, for example, a particular role, then an identity standard might be thought of as a set or vector of meanings, each of which acts as a goal for perceptions. Strictly, each meaning is part of a separate control system, but conceptually it is easier to think of the set or vector of meanings of an identity as part of a single control system. In this more aggregated view, each control system in Figure 1 represents a single identity. The lower control systems (two and three) can be thought of as two identities that influence behavior (more) directly. The two lower-level identities can be thought of as representing multiple identities that have been activated in a situation, each of which is acting to control relevant perceptions by altering behavior in the situation.

At levels other than the “lowest,” outputs of each individual control system are standards at lower level control systems. This is illustrated in Figure 1 by control system one. The higher control system (one) represents a (more abstract) identity (Tsushima and Burke 1999) or set of self-meanings. For these control systems not at the lowest level, control of their perceptions is maintained by altering one or more standards at lower levels, each of which in turn alter standards at lower levels until, ultimately, at the lowest level behavior alters the situation and thus perceptions of that. It is through the operation

of the control systems at higher levels that the control systems of particular identities have their standards (self-meanings) changed.

Thus, the hierarchical perceptual control system in identity theory acts to maintain self-relevant perceptions close to their identity standards at all levels simultaneously. For a single identity, this means that the set of all self-meanings for an identity is conceptualized as a standard for the identity, and that the perception of the set of self-relevant meanings in the situation is maintained as close as possible to its standard through meaningful social behavior. The comparator shown in Figure 1 measures closeness. The output of the comparator (a function of the difference between perceptions and standards) changes behaviors in the situation, or, for higher levels, changes the standards at lower levels. This is the self-verification process, which is a dynamic, ongoing, continuous process of counteracting disturbances that occur in the situation. Such disturbances may be the result of others' behaviors in the situation, one's own behavior in the situation, or ongoing physical processes in the situation.

Through the self-verification process, actions (output behaviors acting on the meanings and resources flows in the environment) are taken to alter the situation and hence the self-relevant meanings in that situation to bring them into congruence with the standards held in the identity. To the extent that process fails and perceived self-relevant meanings are not brought into congruence with their standards two things occur. First, there develops an emotional reaction that is negative when there exists a discrepancy or when the discrepancy increases (and a complementary positive emotional reaction when the discrepancy is decreasing or non-existent). At the same time of this emotional reaction, there occur changes in higher-order control systems such that the standard for the system shifts slowly toward the perception that is not congruent. Behavioral changes



move the perception toward the standard, while identity changes (changing meanings held in the identity standards) move the standard toward the perception (though at a much slower rate). In the longer run, congruence will be reestablished through the operation of both mechanisms.<sup>4</sup>

This process occurs for all activated identities in a situation, so that perceptions of all of the self-relevant meanings of all of the activated identities are simultaneously controlled. For this to happen, all of the meanings must be either orthogonal or aligned. They cannot remain in opposition. Were, for example, two self-relevant meanings perceived in the situation to be in opposition with each other, as one was brought into alignment, the other would be moved out of alignment. One cannot both be good and bad, for example, or both strong and weak. When different identity standards require oppositional meanings, the system is put into an impossible situation in which one or both identity standards cannot be verified. To the extent this happens, the standards themselves shift as outlined above. People re-identify themselves, changing their self-meanings as held in their identity standards.

When identity meanings are orthogonal or unrelated to each other, an action that changes one will leave the other unaffected. It is, of course, possible that while the meanings are cognitively unrelated they are situationally related. For example, the meanings involved in task leadership may be unrelated to the meanings involved in social emotional leadership. Yet, in an empirical instance one may use a limited period of time to engage in behavior that has strong task leadership implications and not use that time to

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<sup>4</sup> It is, of course, possible that an identity will be dropped and the individual will no longer consider himself or herself to have that identity. For example, Cast and Burke (1999) show that spouses who have trouble verifying their spousal identity are more likely to become divorced.

engage in behavior that has SE leadership implications, thus forcing a link between the two in that instance (Stryker 2000). Additionally, it is possible that others may perceive a particular behavior as having positive SE leadership meanings but negative task leadership meanings. For example, acting in a friendly manner may situationally be seen as lacking the directiveness and strength needed for task leadership yet at the same time it may be seen as fulfilling aspects of the social-emotional leadership role.<sup>5</sup>

According to the theory, having two oppositional identities activated at the same time should result in much distress because the verification of one necessarily increases the discrepancy for the other. However it also should result in some sort of change. First, one or both standards may slowly shift as the identities change as suggested above. Second, one or the other identity may become less important, or salient, or the commitment to the identity may become lower as the person withdraws from relationships involved with the identity. Finally, one may avoid situations in which both identities are likely to be simultaneously activated. In all likelihood, all of these processes would occur to varying extents. Over time, however, I would expect that such incongruities would be worn away so to speak, and that most of a person's identities would become at least independent of each other.

When two identities share common meanings the situation is much simpler. Control of the situation to change self-relevant perceptions on the shared dimension of meaning helps both identities. Verifying one of the identities will help verify the other. For example, consider a married person with children. If the spousal identity includes

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<sup>5</sup> It is also possible that the reverse of this is true in some instances; identities that share meanings for an individual are perceived by others as independent and responded to accordingly.

standards for providing material support for one's spouse, and if the parent identity includes standards for providing material support for one's children, then getting a well-paying job will help verify both identities.

Finally, it should be noted that each individual having multiple identities also creates a nexus of those identities that are affected by the fact that a single individual holds them. Events and conditions that affect the individual have the capacity to affect all the identities held by that individual. For example, the individual may become overwhelmed by events with respect to one identity and suffer performance degradations with respect to other otherwise unrelated identities, as when work suffers while an individual is going through a divorce, or an individual who is sick may have trouble verifying many of their identities.

### *Issues of Holding Multiple Identities Within the Social Structure*

As Stryker and Burke (2000) note, sociology has long conceptualized persons as occupying multiple positions or roles within the organized matrix of social relations we call the social structure (Linton 1936; Merton 1957; Parsons 1949; Turner 1978). That these multiple positions may come into conflict with each other within the individual was a logical next step that has been explored in a number of ways using the ideas of role conflict (Gross, Mason Ward, and McEachern 1958), role strain (Secord and Backman 1974), and status inconsistency (Jackson 1962; Jackson and Burke 1965).<sup>6</sup>

While this work was conceptualized in terms of the multiple positions that people hold and the multiple sets of expectations held for them rather than the multiple identities of

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<sup>6</sup> Stryker and Statham (Stryker and Macke 1978; Stryker and Statham 1985) have nicely summarized of much of this work.

those individuals, a translation to the latter perspective is fairly straightforward. Indeed many of the effects of role conflict or status inconsistency (for example, to create distress of one sort or another) only make sense when the individual cares about the conflicting expectations, having internalized them as standards for themselves -- an idea that is very close to our current understanding of the concept of identity (cf, Burke 1980).

The perspective that identities are tied to social structural positions (i.e., that individuals' memberships and roles in the groups, organizations, and networks to which they belong form the basis of many of their identities) grows out of the ideas of structural symbolic interaction theory (Stryker 1980). This perspective suggests a number of ways in which the identities may relate to each other in terms of the way in which the positions are connected within the social structure. For this I note three different conditions: 1) persons may have multiple role identities within a single group, 2) persons may have the same role identities but in different groups, 3) persons may have different role identities within intersecting groups. In all of these situations or conditions, we are talking about multiple identities that are simultaneously activated. If an identity is not activated I suggest it has no effect, since no self-verification is taking place, and no behavior is being used to control perceptions relevant to that identity. For this reason, the abstract concept of multiple identities makes sense only in that there may be multiple identities for people to call up (activate) on different occasions. The overall number of identities held by a person may influence the likelihood that activated identities may conflict with each other. But it is unlikely that, aside from sleep or otherwise being inattentive, one or more identities is always activated, providing guidance for our perceptions and behaviors. The question then is what are the conditions for multiple identity activation?

Multiple identities within a single group. There are two forms of this condition. One may have several roles within a group (e.g., husband, father, son, and brother within an extended family group, or task leader and social emotional leader in the same group). In this case, these different identities will often be concurrently activated. The concurrent activation will have both internal and external consequences. Internally, I may hypothesize that this tendency to be activated concurrently will lead to these identities having similar levels of salience and commitment for the individual, and may come over time to have shared meanings. Similar levels of salience will develop because the identities are often activated together, while similar levels of commitment will develop because they are activated in the presence of common others. Externally, with the identities being concurrently activated, others in the group are likely to develop expectations about the way one engages in behavior relevant to each of the identities such that the identities will be consistent and mutually reinforcing. In this way each of the identities becomes tied to the overall structure of the group in ways that make the self-verification processes for all of the identities much more coordinated.

The second form of multiple identities within a single group exists when a person has an activated identity in one group and something in the situation activates an identity that the person has in another group. This is the perspective that Stryker (2000) seems to suggest in his analysis of competing identities within the context of social movements. With both identities activated, the person engages in behavior that attempts to verify both identities with the result that each is influenced by the requirements of the other.<sup>7</sup> For

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<sup>7</sup> Levels of commitment to each identity, as well as situational demands, would influence which identity is dominant in the situation even though both are activated.

example, I am at a faculty meeting and my faculty identity is activated. At that meeting someone mentions that they had seen and enjoyed a movie playing in town. This information is relevant to my spousal identity, as my wife and I had been contemplating seeing the movie. As a result, my spousal identity becomes activated and I store away the information about the movie to convey to my spouse at a later time. However, while the spousal identity is activated, I am engaging in self-verification processes with respect to that identity as well as the faculty member identity, with the result that I may attempt to speed up the faculty meeting in an attempt to accompany my wife to the movie that evening. In this way, each of the activated identities may influence the salience and commitment of the other, with the likelihood that the more salient identity will influence the less salient identity to a greater extent.

Identities based on a common role within multiple groups. In this case the multiple identities are multiple in a sequential sense, and not necessarily activated at the same time. For example, a person may have the identity “friend” in separate non-overlapping groups, or “treasurer” in several non-overlapping voluntary association. Because each of these role identities resides in the same individual, and because many of the meanings of these identities are already shared having arisen in a common culture (what it means to be a friend to A is similar to what it means to be a friend to B), I would expect that any differences in the friend identities for any one person would diminish over time. Parsimony would argue that where the friend identities did not have to be different, they would become alike reducing the information load for carrying around different expectations and meanings. Additionally, I would expect that such identities would become highly salient because of the extended network of connections to others through the identities (commitment).

Multiple identities in intersecting groups. In this case the different identities that a person has in different groups become simultaneously activated if and when the different groups come into contact or overlap in some way. For example, a person may have the identity “friend” to a peer and “daughter” to her parents. The two groups may intersect when the peer visits in the person’s home while her parents are present. Within this situationally aggregated set of persons, both identities will be activated and sets of meanings and expectations from both identities will be relevant. This is often the situation when role conflict is present. The meanings and expectations for each identity come into conflict when both identities are activated. Under such conditions, I would expect the identity standards involved to shift meanings with the more salient or more committed identity shifting the least. On the other hand, to the extent that the identities share meanings, the commonality of the meanings and expectations should reinforce each other. The increased ties in the larger network of others (parents and peer) should increase the level of commitment to the shared meanings and hence the identities that share those meanings.

There is a second form of this condition that results because people are the carriers of identities. Identities meet and interact when people meet and interact. One can meet others because of a shared group membership (for example, belonging to the same union) or role relations (for example, doctors meet patients, nurses, drug salesmen, etc.). Because individuals hold many identities, when one individual with a certain identity meets another because of the context of that identity, the identities of the two persons other than the ones that brought them together may become relevant and activated in

unexpected ways.<sup>8</sup> Consider, for example, the father of my daughter's kindergarten friend. We may meet picking up our daughters at school and initially know each other as the father of my daughter's friend. Over time, however, other of our identities may become activated and known to each other. He may know though his work identity of a job opportunity that I with my work identity could fulfill. Through this mechanism, there is a random element to the way in which identities are interconnected both within and between people that results from both the structural arrangements of society, the connection of individuals to those structures, and the multiple identities that are housed within any given individual. Highly salient identities become activated and known to others who may then find additional ways to relate to the person through activating other identities of their own. Thus the network of relations expands as identities find new ways of verifying themselves by activating relevant identities in other individuals. Lovers may meet at church, skiers at work, friends in voluntary association meetings, and co-workers at fraternal gatherings.

### *The Issues*

Bringing together the above discussions on the variety of ways in which multiple identities of individuals may be linked, activated and connected both within and between individuals, and the way in which the perceptual control system operates to verify all active identities, there are a number of general principles that can be listed and offered as hypotheses to guide future research.

1. *Situations are sought out to verify activated identities.*

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<sup>8</sup> Additionally, identities that one does not want known may also become known.



2. *Situations will contain meanings that activate (other) relevant identities.*
3. *Identities with common meanings will tend to be activated together.*
4. *Identities often activated together will develop similar levels of salience and commitment.*
5. *Identities will adjust to the pressures of the situations, the other identities concurrently activated, and the meanings and expectations of others in the situation.*
6. *Multiple identities held by persons in different positions in the social structure will have different demands, expectations, and meanings placed on them with the result that the multiple identities of a person in one position will relate to each other differently than the multiple identities of a person in another position.*
7. *Identities higher in the salience hierarchy will take preference in the verification process over identities lower in the salience hierarchy.*
8. *Identities with higher levels of commitment will take preference in the verification process over identities with lower levels of commitment.*

In the present paper, I begin this program of research by testing the sixth of these general principles through an examination of the task and social emotional (SE) leadership identities and roles within task-oriented groups. For this I will look at these identities as held by persons who hold the position of coordinator as opposed to those who do not hold that position.

### *The Discussion Groups*

In these task-oriented discussion groups, each individual holds two separate identities: task leader and social emotional leader. While these may in some sense be thought of as two sets of meaning “packets” for a single leadership identity, their apparent independence or at times oppositional character (Bales and Slater 1955; Burke 1972) suggests they are separate roles with separate identities.

I examine how these two identities play themselves out for persons who are in two structurally different locations in the groups and therefore subjected to different meanings and expectations. Each group has a designated person who is the coordinator of the discussion. The persons who occupy this structural position will be contrasted with the persons who do not occupy this position. The theory of task and social emotional role differentiation notes that expectation for task activity from persons who are in the legitimated coordinator role are different from the expectations for task activity held for persons who are not in the legitimated coordinator position (Burke 1972).

Specifically, task activity from official coordinators is much more accepted and viewed as legitimate, while task activity from others is less accepted and tends to violate expectations. The theory went on to say that it was the negative reactions to non-legitimate task leadership performance that, in turn, prevented those non-legitimate task leaders from engaging in social emotional activity. This had the result of allowing or encouraging someone else to engage in more of the social emotional activity creating a likelihood that this other person would be the social emotional leader with the result being task and social emotional leadership role differentiation. The focus in the present context is to examine the way in which these role performances are influenced by the identities behind them and the context in which they occur.

## Procedures

### *Sample*

Forty-eight four-person laboratory groups, each composed of two males and two females, were formed from a random sample of undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university. The students were invited to participate in a study of communication in small groups. They arrived at a general meeting (of 50-60 students at a time) at which the study was explained in general terms as a study of communication in groups and the factors that influence communication. The students were told that they would be paid \$10.00 for filling out a background questionnaire at the general meeting and participating in a discussion group at some point in the next two weeks.

After this, they filled out a schedule of times they would be available, and then filled out the background questionnaire that took about 20 minutes to complete. During this time, the investigator constructed groups randomly from the persons who were available at the specific times, with the added constraint that there be two males and two females in each group. After the questionnaire was completed, group assignment times were given to each person along with a reminder slip. All subjects were called the day prior to their scheduled meeting to remind them of that meeting.

The group discussion sessions were held over the next two weeks following the general meeting. Each group of two males and two females participated in four different discussions using group polarization or choice dilemma protocols (two that usually showed a shift to risk and two that usually showed a shift to conservatism). The choice dilemma problems were used to provide the groups with a task in which they had to reach a consensus.

The four discussions were contained in the one session that the group met. Each session lasted about an hour and a half, with each discussion lasting from ten to twenty minutes. Each of the discussions followed the same format. Prior to the discussion, the individual members read the choice dilemma and wrote down their personal recommendation. Following this, the members were instructed to discuss the problem and come to a group consensus for making a group recommendation. After each discussion was completed, subjects filled out a questionnaire evaluating the discussion and rating each other on a series of items measuring the degree to which they performed various activities during the discussion.

In half of the groups, chosen randomly, one person was designated as the coordinator. This person was told to moderate the discussion and was given a sheet on which to record the group's consensual answer. In the other half of the groups, no one was designated the coordinator and the sheet on which to record the group's answer was simply placed on the table in front of all participants with an indication that the group's final answer was to be recorded there. In this way, one person in half the groups was given legitimacy to act in a leadership manner, while no one had this legitimacy in the other groups.

### *Measures*

From the background questionnaires, measures of task leadership identity and social emotional leadership identity were taken (see Table 1). The task leadership identity consists of five items that tap self-meanings of task leadership in groups such as "when I work on committees, I like to take charge of things." These items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .74. Seven items that tap self-meanings of social leadership in groups measure the social emotional leadership identity. These include items such as

“most people would think of me as outgoing and sociable,” and “I try to have close personal relations with people.” These items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .83.

(Table 1 About Here)

The post discussion questionnaires included ratings of each member by all the members (including self-ratings) on eight items designed to measure task and social emotional leadership performance. The task leadership performance items are given in Table 2, and include, for example, “guiding the discussion and keeping it moving effectively,” and “providing fuel for the discussion by introducing ideas and opinions for the rest of the group to discuss.” The four items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .94.

(Table 2 About Here)

The social emotional leadership performance items, also given in Table 2, include, for example, “acting to keep relationships between members cordial and friendly,” and “intervening to smooth over disagreements.” The four items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .80.

Table 3 contains the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the scales on which the analysis is based. It is presented without comment.

(Table 3 About Here)

### *The Model*

Figure 2 shows the model that was used in the present research. Each leadership identity influences the corresponding set of leadership behaviors, which behaviors are also

influenced by other things in the discussion, including the behaviors of other persons in the discussion.

Figure 2 About Here

## Results

I begin with the hypothesis that role identity meanings create role performances with corresponding meanings. While this is not new, having been documented many times, it provides a starting point. We see from the results in Table 4 that for task and social emotional leadership identities, the greater the leadership identity the greater is the corresponding role performance (paths tt and ss). There are differences in the degree to which each of the identities influences the behaviors, but this may be a question of the quality of the measurement of each as well. There are no differences in this effect between those in and not in the coordinator position.

(Table 4 About Here)

The second hypothesis is that when role performances are disturbed so that their meanings do not fully correspond to the meanings implied in the identity, people will act to counteract the disturbances. Persons who, as a result of disturbances, perform more of the behavior than indicated by the meanings in their identity will act to reduce their level of performance. In a similar fashion, should disturbances lead to a performance less than expected given their identity meanings, people will act to increase their performance level. This is the agentic part of an identity in which people attempt to resist outside pressures in order to maintain consistency between their identity standards and self-relevant perceptions of self-relevant meanings in the situation.

This can be shown in two ways. The more traditional way allows sequential errors on the performance measures to correlate. A negative correlation would indicate that a large positive performance residual (performing more than expected) at one time is associated with a smaller residual at the next time. Similarly, a larger negative residual (performing less than expected) should be associated with a smaller residual at the next time. When this analysis is done in the present research, the expected negative correlations among adjacent error terms are observed for both task and social emotional performances, and for both coordinators and non-coordinators, thus indicating the sequential adjustment of leadership performances to reduce discrepancies.

However, a more direct and theoretically driven way of showing the response to discrepancy between actual performance levels and levels set by one's identity places a path from the error term (residual) at one time to the performance level at the next time. This is the model shown in Figure 2. In this way the magnitude and direction of the discrepancy (as reflected in the error term) are allowed to directly influence subsequent leadership performance.<sup>9</sup> This model also fits the data very well and shows a strong negative direct effect of residual on later performance. This is true for both the task leadership (path d of Figure 2 and Table 4) and the social emotional leadership (paths b1 and b of Figure 2 and Table 4). Again, a positive residual (performing more than expected), reduces the level of performance next time; conversely a negative residual

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<sup>9</sup> The difference between this and the more traditional model is that by correlating adjacent error terms as in the traditional way of modeling, an indirect path is set up between non-adjacent error terms. Thus, with correlated error terms a correlation between  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  and a correlation between  $e_2$  and  $e_3$  allows an implicit correlation between  $e_1$  and  $e_3$ . In the model with direct paths from the error at time  $i$  to performance at time  $i+1$ , no such indirect correlation is assumed. Each of these two models fits the data approximately equally well, and, because they are not hierarchical one to another, there is no way to test whether one is better than the other. The model in Figure 2 is preferred because it represents the theory more closely.

increases performance at the next time point. Thus, we see the strong counteraction that occurs when performances are pushed out of line with the identity standards.

Thus far, I have shown that identities do influence performance, and that when there are disturbances to that identity-performance relation, individuals change their performance levels to bring them into accord with the levels that would be expected given their identity meanings. The next question concerns the relationship between these two identities. What the present data show is that there is very little relationship between the levels of task leadership identity and the levels of social emotional leadership identity held by the individuals. The correlation of  $-.10$  (covariance of  $-.04$  shown in the bottom of Table 4) is not significant nor is it different between coordinators and non-coordinators.<sup>10</sup> The degree to which people see themselves as task leaders is independent of the degree to which they see themselves as social leaders. Yet, given the above, it is clear that people act to portray themselves consistently with the meanings in both of their identities and attempt to counteract disturbances to both of these self-perceptions.

We also see that while the task and social emotional identities are independent of each other, there is also no direct connection between task leadership performance and social emotional leadership performance (paths f and g in Figure 2 and Table 4). The degree to which one performs task leadership activity had no influence on the degree to which one performs social emotional activity, and vice-versa. This is true for both coordinators and non-coordinators in these groups.

However, that does not mean the task and social emotional leadership activities are independent of each other. As the error correlations between these two activities shows

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, the coordinators were selected randomly, so there should be no systematic correlation.



(path e in Figure 2 and Table 4), there is a strong positive residual correlation between the activities for the coordinators. For the non-coordinators there is only a small positive residual correlation between these two leadership activities. Here is where we see the primary difference ( $\chi^2 = 9.69$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) between coordinators and non-coordinators.

This means that although the meanings contained in the task and social emotional leadership identities are unrelated, and although the task and social emotional leadership role performances do not influence each other directly, there are, nevertheless other external forces in the group that are causing the two performances to become coordinated such that high (low) levels of task leadership accompany high (low) levels of social emotional leadership. There are two important implications of this: one for the theory of leadership role differentiation, the other for the identities in question.

Recall the theory of role differentiation says that non-legitimate task leaders generate hostile, negative reactions in other members that make their social emotional performance suffer. From this we would expect the task performance of non-coordinators to negatively influence their social emotional performance. We do not see this in the data. The two performances are independent of each other, as are the meanings in their two leadership identities. An individual with high levels of task performance is hardly more likely to be a high performer on social emotional leadership activities than a person with low levels of task leadership performance. It does not appear that non-legitimated task leaders are prevented from performing social emotional leadership activity.

Instead, we see that coordinators who are performing higher levels of task leadership activity are also performing higher levels of social emotional leadership activity (and vice-versa), and this is being done not because of any shared meanings between the two

activities or because of some causal link between the two activities, but apparently because of the activities and expectation of others in the group (things not included in the model). Thus, it is *not* the presence of some pressure on non-coordinators to prevent them from engaging in both activities (leading to role differentiation), but rather the presence of a pressure on the coordinators *to* engage in both activities (leading to a lack of differentiation). Overall, role differentiation among the non-coordinators appears to result from the relative independence of the roles and meanings.<sup>11</sup> The reduced level of role differentiation among the coordinators appears to result from the behaviors and expectations of others in the group and not the propensity of coordinators to engage in leadership behaviors with common meanings.

There are consequences of this pattern of outcomes for the identities of the participants. Principle two above suggests that people who cannot change their performances to correspond with the meanings implied in their identities will find over time that the meanings implied in their identities shift to correspond to the meanings of their performances (Burke and Cast 1997; Swann 1997). I expect, therefore, that under this pressure on coordinators to engage in similar task and social emotional leadership, these two sets of meanings will lose their independence and come to share some common core of meaning within the coordinators' identities. This expectation would not hold for non-coordinators inasmuch as they are not subject to the same behaviors and expectations by others in the group. The correlation between their task and SE leadership

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<sup>11</sup> The focus here is on all non-coordinators, not just those who are performing high levels of task leadership activity. Among these latter persons, there is a tendency for lower than expected levels of SE activity as found in earlier research (Burke 1972).

performances is minimal and there are thus only minimal pressures to bring the meanings together.

## **Discussion**

Identities are control systems in which outputs in the form of behaviors change the situation to bring perceived self-relevant meanings in the situation into alignment with the self-meanings contained in the identity standard; this is the self-verification process. It is understood that this self-verification process, however, operates only for identities that are activated. Indeed, we may understand that activation can be defined as setting in motion the self-verification process for a particular identity. The fact that the multiple identities of a person operate within the overall perceptual control system and often share meanings imposes constraints on the possible relationships that might exist among them. Because of the systemic aspects of the perceptual control system for all activated identities it would be difficult if not impossible to maintain identities that have contrastive meanings. Such contrastive meanings between activated identities would cause a reorganization and shift in identity meanings to keep them at least orthogonal, so that verifying one would not result in the other becoming more discrepant with self-relevant meanings in the situation. Of course, if the person could act in a way to keep such contrastive identities from being activated at the same time, the problem would not ensue.

Because identities are always activated within the context of the overall social structure in which they exist, they both influence and are influenced by this structure and their position therein. Such positioning helps determine not only levels of commitment and salience for the identities, but also the variations in the meanings contained in the

identities. Additionally, the sharing of meanings across identities brings about commonalities in the levels of commitment and salience of the identities that do share meanings, thus feeding back to changing the social structure. Additionally, inasmuch as identities seek out opportunities for their verification, they come to influence the connectedness of persons with others to accomplish that verification which also shapes the social structure.

In the present paper we saw the way in which the manner of embeddedness of individuals in the social structure influenced the way in which behaviors emanating from two identities as part of the verification process. While each person independent of position engaged in task and SE behaviors to verify their task and SE leadership identities, and while each person independent of position sought to counteract disturbances to the verification process, those persons in the coordinator position were subjected to different expectations and meanings than those not in that position, with the consequence that their task and SE performances differed. Coordinators came to have more highly correlated levels of performance of task and SE behaviors than non-coordinators even though the two identities were relatively independent. Over time, we would expect this effect of the position of coordinator would lead to adjustments not only in performance (as we have seen) but also in the meanings of the task and SE leadership identities (increasing the amount of shared meaning). Such changes would take time, and unfortunately in the present study these measurements were not taken. Change in identities as the result of situational influences, however, has been documented (Burke and Cast 1997; Cast, Stets, and Burke 1999). It remains for future research to show how the multiple identities one holds may come to share meanings in response to the situational and structural conditions in which the identities are played out.



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Table 1. Item analysis of Task and Social Leadership Identity Measures

	Item Total Correlations
<b>Task Leadership Identity</b>	
I try to maintain my own opinions even though many other people may have a different point of view	.54
When I work on committees I like to take charge of things	.70
I try to influence strongly other people's actions	.64
When I work with a group of people, I like to have things done my way	.70
I try to be the dominant person when I am with people	.71
Omega reliability of scale: <b>.74</b>	
<b>Social Emotional Leadership Identity</b>	
My personal relations with people are cool and distant (R)	.64
It is hard for me to start a conversation when I am with strangers (R)	.70
Most people would think of me as outgoing and sociable	.77
I feel nervous in situations where I have to meet a lot of people (R)	.60
I try to have close personal relations with people	.52
I have fewer friends than most people my age (R)	.65
I am an enthusiastic person	.64
Omega reliability of scale: <b>.83</b>	

Table 2. Item Analysis of Task and Social Leadership Performance Measures

	Item Total Correlations
<b>Task Leadership Performance</b>	
Providing fuel for the discussion by introducing ideas and opinions for the rest of the group to discuss	.91
Guiding the discussion and keeping it moving effectively	.86
Attempting to influence the group's opinion	.87
Standing out as the leader of the discussion	.94
Omega reliability of scale: <b>.94</b>	
<b>Social Emotional Leadership Performance</b>	
Acting to keep relationship between members cordial and friendly	.82
Attempting to harmonize differences of opinion	.80
Intervening to smooth over disagreements	.84
Making tactful comments to heal any hurt feelings that may have arisen during the discussion	.63
Omega reliability of scale: <b>.80</b>	

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations<sup>1</sup> of the Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variables									
					(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1) Task Leadership Identity	.00	.52	.00	.70	1.00	-.18	.29	.11	.18	.07	.28	-.01	.16	.01
(2) SE Leadership Identity	.07	.8	-.09	1.05	.13	1.00	.02	.15	.11	.16	.06	.24	-.06	.18
(3) Task Performance 1	.50 <sup>*</sup>	1.05	-.17 <sup>*</sup>	1.02	.38	.13	1.00	.41	.52	.19	.47	.17	.47	.17
(4) SE Performance 1	.40 <sup>*</sup>	.97	-.21 <sup>*</sup>	1.05	.01	.15	.24	1.00	.26	.53	.24	.41	.21	.44
(5) Task Performance 2	.44 <sup>*</sup>	.83	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	.98	.24	.10	.57	.18	1.00	.28	.54	.28	.48	.11
(6) SE Performance 2	.42 <sup>*</sup>	.96	-.06 <sup>*</sup>	1.05	-.08	.00	.26	.58	.31	1.00	.29	.56	.25	.42
(7) Task Performance 3	.26 <sup>*</sup>	.93	-.09 <sup>*</sup>	.98	.28	-.02	.46	-.04	.50	.00	1.00	.32	.53	.18
(8) SE Performance 3	.01	.84	-.07	.97	-.08	-.03	-.06	.38	.26	.36	.30	1.00	.20	.38
(9) Task Performance 4	.14	.98	-.05	.99	.27	.20	.53	.03	.41	-.04	.47	.13	1.00	.23
(10) SE Performance 4	.29 <sup>*</sup>	.91	-.03 <sup>*</sup>	.95	-.06	.19	.13	.44	.12	.31	-.03	.48	.48	1.00

\* Differences between coordinators and non-coordinators:  $p \leq .05$

<sup>1</sup> For the correlations, coordinators are below the diagonal, non-coordinators are above the diagonal.

Table 4. Unstandardized Path Coefficients and Covariances for Coordinators and Non-Coordinators under the Model of Figure 1.<sup>a</sup>

Path <sup>b</sup>	Coordinators	Non-Coordinators	Path Label
seid → se1	.17*	.17*	ss
tskid → tsk1	.38*	.38*	tt
e1 → se2	-.38*	-.38*	b1‡
e2 → se3	-.58*	-.58*	b
e3 → se4	-.58*	-.58*	b
e5 → tsk2	-.59*	-.59*	d
e6 → tsk3	-.59*	-.59*	d
e7 → tsk4	-.59*	-.59*	d
se1 → se2	.86*	.86*	a
se2 → se3	.86*	.86*	a
se3 → se4	.86*	.86*	a
tsk1 → tsk2	.96*	.96*	c
tsk2 → tsk3	.96*	.96*	c
tsk3 → tsk4	.96*	.96*	c
tsk1 → se1	-.03	.03	g
tsk2 → se2	-.03	.03	g
tsk3 → se3	-.03	.03	g
tsk4 → se4	-.03	.03	g
se1 → tsk1	-.07	.06	f
se2 → tsk2	-.07	.06	f
se3 → tsk3	-.07	.06	f
se4 → tsk4	-.07	.06	f

Covariances			
seid ↔ tskid	-.04	-.04	ts
e1 ↔ e5	.34*†	.10*†	e
e3 ↔ e7	.34*†	.10*†	e
e2 ↔ e6	.34*†	.10*†	e
e4 ↔ e8	.34*†	.10*†	e

<sup>a</sup> Chi-Square for Model of Figure 2: 87.2, df=77, p=.2.

<sup>b</sup> The variables seid = SE leadership identity, tskid = Task leadership identity, se1-se4 = social emotional leadership performance, tsk1-tsk4 = task leadership performance, e1-e3 = SE leadership performance discrepancy, e5-e7 = task leadership discrepancy.

\* p≤.05

† diff. between Coordinators and Non-coordinators: p≤.05

‡ diff. between paths b1 and b: p≤.05

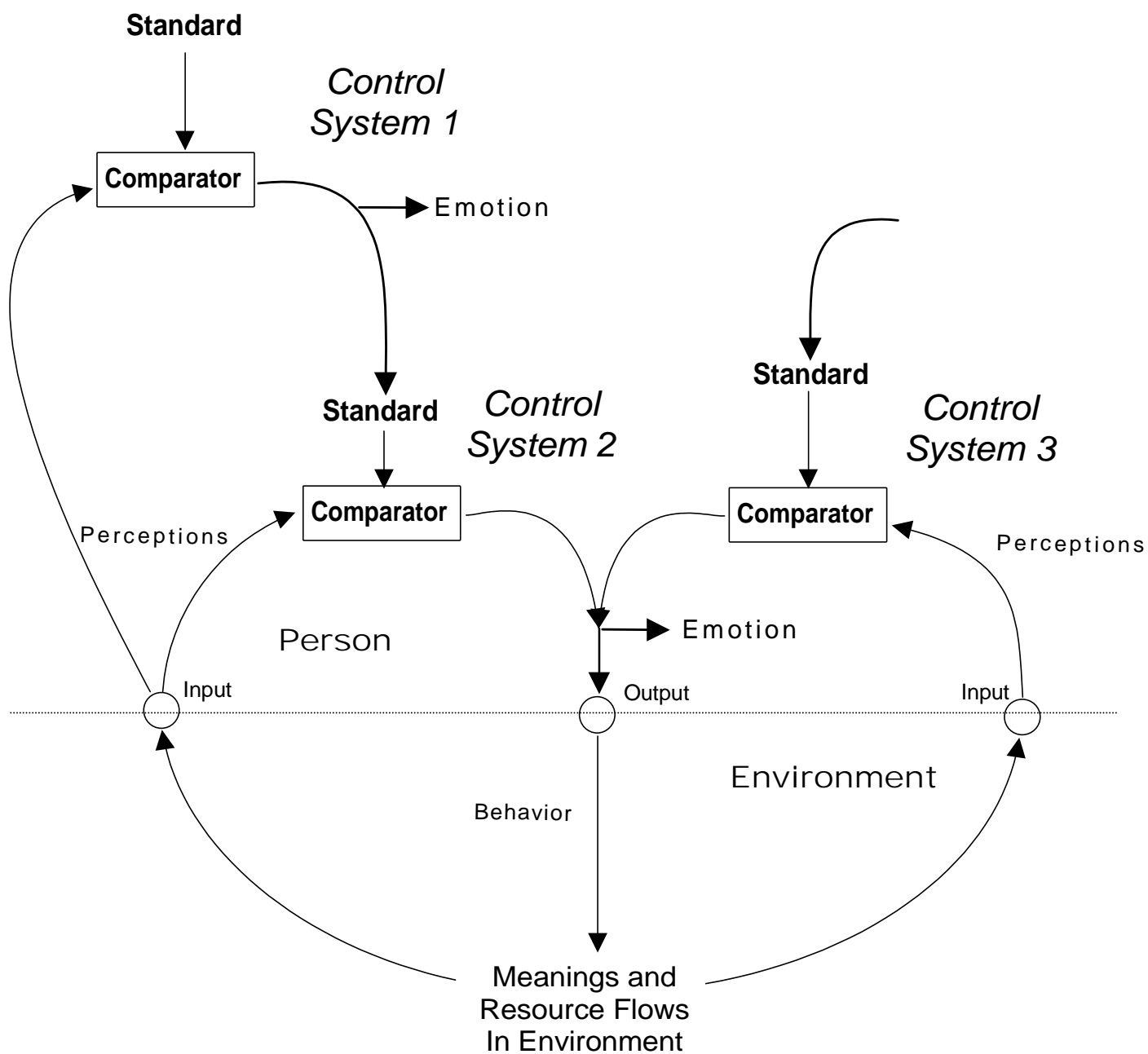


Figure 1. Identity Model of Three Control Systems

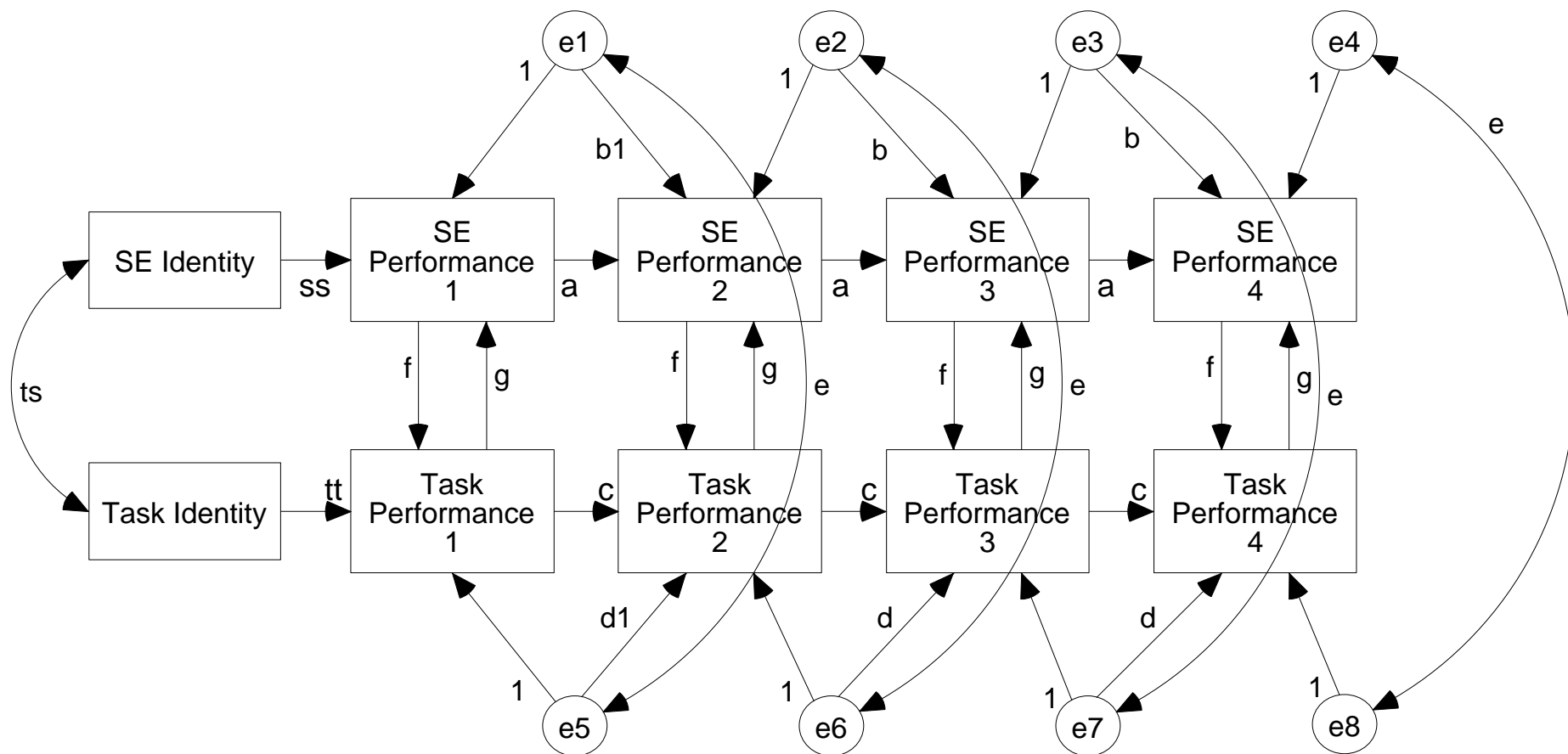


Figure 2. Model of the Relationship between Task and Social Emotional Leadership