

**EXPLORING HOW ROLE-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT STAGE MODERATES
PERSON-POSSESSION RELATIONS**

Accepted for Publication in:

Research in Consumer Behavior, Vol. 10. 2004

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ABSTRACT

In this article we examine how person-possession relations vary across three stages of the role-identity cultivation processes. We explore stage-related variation in the accumulation of role-related consumption stimuli and their self-relevance in a cross-sectional sample of two freely chosen athletic role-identities. Results show that as individuals cultivate an identity they accumulate more role-related possessions, social ties, and media commitments, and evaluation of those elements becomes more positive, yet the impact of those stimuli on self-conception declines. Ultimately, the results suggest that a full understanding of person-possession relations must include consideration of how role-identity cultivation stage moderates relations between people and consumption stimuli.

EXPLORING HOW ROLE-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT STAGE MODERATES PERSON-POSSESSION RELATIONS

Consumption symbols anchor our identities in observable evidence (Belk 1988; McCracken 1988; Grayson and Shulman 2000) but those anchors change as our identities change (Myers 1985). To begin to understand how self-change moderates our relations with consumption stimuli, Kleine and Kleine (2000) outlined five stages of self-cultivation for freely chosen, ordinary role-identities (e.g., bridge player, cross-country skier, fly fisherman). The five stages include presocialization, discovery, construction, maintenance, and disposition. The authors propose that how people relate to particular consumption stimuli will vary across the stages. That is, role-identity cultivation stage moderates relations between people and consumption stimuli.

For example, consider a person learning tennis for the first time. At the urging of friends who play he acquires a tennis racket, tennis balls, and tennis shoes, learns basic rules of the game, and watches tennis tournaments on television. Although he has the consumption signs of the role signaling to others and to himself that he plays tennis, he does not yet confidently label himself a tennis player. Over time, he comes to enjoy tennis and finds he can play fairly well, at least according to what his friends say. He accumulates more tennis related gear, products, and media (e.g, magazines, videos) helping him learn more and improve his game. Meanwhile others recognize improvements in his game. This feedback establishes his status as a tennis player in ways more convincing than mere ownership of tennis related possessions. Now he is really

starting to think of himself as a tennis player. That is, he starts to internalize the identity of tennis player and label himself accordingly. As he continues to cultivate his tennis identity he finds ways to integrate tennis into his lifestyle and spend more time with tennis. Tennis becomes important to his identity and if someone asks him to describe himself, “I play tennis” is likely to be mentioned. The tennis player has gone through a developmental process of internalizing a secure self-label describing the role-identity.

What is the role of products, and other consumption stimuli, in the role-cultivation process? To the rookie, tennis “stuff” signifies interest in tennis. According to symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982), and findings in various identity-acquisition contexts (e.g., Becker 1960; 1963; Donnelly and Young 1988; Piliavin and Callero 1991; Wheaton 2000), rookies anchor identity claims with material symbols and other external evidence of the role (e.g., use of related media, association with others who play tennis). Having these role-appropriate things supports identity claims in lieu of more enduring evidence (e.g., performance ability). Veterans – individuals who possess performance behaviors and role expertise – are less dependent on external signs of an identity to make the identity claim (“I am a tennis player”). That is, as the tennis player accumulates consumption symbols demonstrating the identity claim, the relative importance of those things for propping up the self-definition gradually decreases. As this example illustrates, stage of identity cultivation moderates the relationship between an aspect of the self (an identity) and related possessions and consumption symbols.

In this article, we examine how person-possession relations vary across three

stages of the role-identity cultivation processes. We examine stage-related variation in the accumulation of role-related consumption stimuli, and their self-relevance, in a cross-sectional sample of two freely chosen athletic role-identities. Among other things, the results suggest that while people accumulate role-related possessions, social ties, and media commitments in the course of identity cultivation, and as evaluation of those elements becomes more positive, the impact of those stimuli on self-conception declines. Ultimately, the results suggest that a full understanding of person-possession relations requires considering how role-identity cultivation stage moderates relations between people and consumption stimuli.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Self and Consumption: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Identity Perspective

Symbolic interactionist identity theory undergirds our conceptualization. Originating from sociology, this version of identity theory (e.g., Burke and Reitzes 1981; Hoelter 1983; Piliavin and Callero 1991; Stryker 1980) has been applied to consumer behavior theoretically (Solomon 1983) and empirically (Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine 2002).¹ This perspective emphasizes how people

¹ Several strains of identity theory co-exist in the sociological literature. Weigert, Teitge, and Teitge (1986) provide a comprehensive review of identity theory's various flavors.

assemble role-related consumption stimuli to cultivate role-identities.

Social identity theory casts role-identity cultivation not as just an inside out, internally driven process with consumption as the dependent variable (e.g., Piliavin and Callero 1991). Rather, as Solomon (1983) asserts, and Kleine, et al. (1993) support empirically, social stimuli, including possessions spur identity development from the outside-in. To clarify our use of concepts and terminology we explain key features of symbolic interactionist identity theory applied to consumption.

Role-Identity. "Identity," in consumer research, often refers to a person's overall or global self (e.g., Belk 1988; Schouten 1991). Symbolic interactionist social identity theory, in contrast, views a person's global self as a portfolio of hierarchically ranked role-identities. Each identity corresponds to a social role (Burke and Reitzes 1981; Markus 1977; Rosenberg 1979; Solomon 1983; Stryker 1980; Turner 1978). A role-identity is a person's individualized version of a social role (e.g., how Ed carries out his role as a cyclist, or how Ellen does her antique collecting).

Role-Person Merger. As a person accumulates commitments to a role-identity (e.g., role-enabling possessions), the identity becomes more central to overall self-definition; that is, the person merges with the role (Turner 1978). Role-person merger indicates the importance of a role-identity to a person's overall self-definition (Turner 1978). For example, the role-identity of tennis player is central to self-definition for strongly committed individuals but not so for those new to the activity.

Greater role-person merger is associated with a number of characteristics (e.g., Becker 1960; 1963; Burke and Reitzes 1981; Piliavin and Callero 1991; Stryker 1980).

One, greater role-person merger means the role-identity factors more into a person's self-definition and self-evaluation. Two, the person devotes a greater percentage of time to the activity. Three, the person has more extensive role-related social ties and labels him or herself as a person who performs the role. Four, the person displays role-appropriate attitudes and behaviors and other role-indicative cues (Turner 1978). Five, the person uses role-related products and media (Kleine, et al. 1993). Six, role-person merger predicts behavioral intentions, behaviors, and the stability of role behavior (e.g., Piliavin and Callero 1991). These characteristics suggest that role-person merger is a useful way to identify commitment to, and experience with, a particular role-identity.

Signs of Identity Commitment. We associate social roles with particular stereotypical consumption constellations. A consumption constellation is "a cluster of complementary products, specific brands, and/or consumption activities associated with a social role." (Solomon and Assael 1987, p. 191). For example, in Solomon and Buchanan's (1991) study respondents associated the Yuppie (young urban professional) lifestyle stereotype with foreign cars, imported wine, urban sports, gourmet ice cream, luxury appliances, and credit cards. As the example illustrates, consumption constellations demonstrate symbolic and instrumental complementarity (Englis and Solomon 1995; Solomon 1988; Solomon and Buchanan 1991; Solomon and Englis 1994). Not only are constellation elements necessary to enact a role, but they also signal to others "who I am," inviting reflected appraisals necessary for identity formation (Laverie, et al. 2002; Solomon 1983).

Our study involves people's personal versions of stereotypical consumption constellations. Individualized role-related consumption constellations include: an identity-related product cluster, social commitments, media commitments, and performance behaviors (Kleine, et al. 1993; Laverie, et al. 2002). A role-related product cluster (RRPC) is the set of products instrumentally and symbolically supporting identity enactment for an individual consumer (Kernan and Sommers 1967). For example, most tennis players assemble tennis equipment, clothing, and accessories. The particular products and brands in the consumption set tend to become more idiosyncratic and less stereotypical with the accumulation of experience and knowledge of the role (Englis and Solomon 1995; Solomon and Douglas 1987).

Successful role-identity cultivation requires investing in social commitments. Social commitments are the role-related social ties people accumulate as they cultivate the role-identity. Social interactions are essential because they shape and support a person's emerging self-definition-in-role through the mechanism of reflected appraisals (Solomon 1983).

We tend to associate particular roles with specific media (Solomon and Buchanan 1991). For example, Yuppies were associated with particular television programs and upscale magazines (Solomon and Buchanan 1991). Individuals cultivating a role accumulate related media commitments (e.g., magazines, newspapers, books, videos). Media extend identity-related social networks, augment identity-related knowledge, and provide additional bases for evaluation of self in role (Richins 1991; Solomon and Douglas 1987).

A role-identity consumption constellation also includes accumulated performance behaviors. Performance evidence provides “real” proof of an identity claim. This evidence has greater effect on self-image in role and continued pursuit of the role (Laverie, et al. 2002) than do possessions and other less enduring symbols of identity (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Accumulating role-related possessions, social ties, media, and performances constitutes evidence of the identity and encourages the reflected appraisal process that leads to internalizing the role-identity.

Internalizing a Role-Identity. People use the available evidence to gradually form self-perceptions (Bem 1972) of themselves with respect to a role. The evidence is anything observable including one’s own identity-relevant behaviors and accumulated consumption constellation elements (possessions, media, social ties). Other people use this same evidence to infer the roles played by another, leading to reflected appraisals that fuel identity internalization (Solomon 1983). In a series of studies of voluntary blood donation, Piliavin and Callero (1991) found that with repeated donations veteran donors internalized self-perceptions as donors, based on behavioral experience and reflections from others (e.g., donation staff, other donors). Donnelly and Young’s (1988) ethnographic studies of climbers and rugby players portrayed that identity-internalization occurred in phases. Becker’s (1960; 1963) in-depth observations about role-identity adoption demonstrated that accumulating role-related social ties encouraged identity internalization. Upon forming the self-identification, the role behavior becomes self-sustaining (Becker 1960; Charng, Piliavin, and Callero 1988; 1963; Donnelly and Young 1988; Piliavin and Callero 1991).

Rookies Versus Veterans and Self-Completion. Identity internalization has important implications for how people use consumption constellations at different stages of identity development. Symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982) asserts that people new to a role-identity rely upon more easily obtained symbols of self-definition (e.g., products) because that is all they have. For example, newcomers to rugby, climbing, and windsurfing placed greater emphasis on visible, observable elements of the stereotypical role style (Donnelly and Young 1988; Wheaton 2000). Rookie blood donors, who had yet to assemble evidence of a donor self-definition, were more attuned to, and motivated by, external pressures (e.g., social ties, media appeals; Piliavin and Callero 1991).

In contrast, veterans are less sensitive to external pressures. Having internalized the self-definition, veterans depend less on external stimuli to indicate the identity (Solomon 1983; Solomon and Douglas 1987). They have accumulated more enduring, more “real” evidence from which to form their self-perceptions. Enduring evidence includes role-identity knowledge, experiences, procedural expertise, and social ties (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). For example, Solomon and Douglas (1987) found that experienced female business professionals relied less on business sources about how to dress professionally because they were more knowledgeable about role appropriate behaviors.

An interesting implication of veterans needing to rely less on externally observable evidence is this: as a person successfully accumulates externally observable consumption constellation elements, the importance of those elements for role-identity

self-definition falls. That is, as role-identity development progresses through its stages, the relationship between self and role-related consumption changes systematically. This is the basic idea we explore here.

Stages of the Identity Project Life Cycle for Ordinary Consumption Activities

Kleine and Kleine (2000) outlined five stages of role-identity development for freely chosen, ordinary role-identities (e.g., bridge player, cross-country skier, fly fisherman; See Figure 1): role-identity presocialization, discovery, construction, maintenance, and disposition. The following descriptions of the stages are based on Kleine and Kleine's (2000) stage descriptions, empirical findings in various contexts (blood donor, marijuana smoker, climbers, rugby players, windsurfers), and the results of depth interviews with aerobics participants (Laverie 1995). The stages apply to the domain of freely chosen, achieved identities, not to ascribed identities (e.g., gender, racial, or ethnic status).

Presocialization. Before taking personal interest in a role-identity activity, people usually have tacit cultural knowledge about it, especially for aspirational roles (Lowrey, Englis, Shavitt, and Solomon 2001). Media and exposure to role-group members convey information, although role images consist of an outsider's "caricatured and stereotypical" conceptions of role-behaviors (Donnelly and Young 1988, p. 225).

Identity Discovery. The goal of identity discovery is to assess the potential fit of a new identity with the identities that already comprise one's self-definition. The individual asks himself, "Should I do this?" or "Do people like me do this?" (Piliavin and

Callero 1991). Invitation, encouragement, or coercion from others usually initiates role exploration (Becker 1963; Donnelly and Young 1988; Piliavin and Callero 1991). The role-identity is not internalized and role-person merger is low. Understanding of the role remains an outsider's perspective (Donnelly and Young 1988). Limited identity-related social ties and experience force rookies to rely on stereotypical perceptions of role-appropriate behavior for evaluating identity progress ("How am I doing?"). Rookies have yet to develop enduring, genuine indicators of the identity claim and must rely more on external indicators of the role (Donnelly and Young 1988; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981; 1982; Wheaton 2000).

Identity Construction. At the identity construction stage the individual actively devotes time, energy, and resources to the identity. A person no longer asks, "Should I do this?" but instead "When, or how should I do this activity?" (Piliavin and Callero 1991). The person continues accumulating appropriate possessions, media, and social ties. Adoption of the values, perceptions, and attitudes of the role-related group also begins (Donnelly and Young 1988). A novice may learn, for example, that overt display of certain role-symbols is not appropriate. Expanding one's identity-supporting social ties provides expanded opportunities to experience identity confirming (or disconfirming) feedback from others. Positive experiences and feedback (reflected appraisals) facilitate role-person merger development (Becker 1960; Hoelter 1983; Piliavin and Callero 1991) and encourage continued pursuit of the role-identity (Laverie, et al. 2002).

Identity Maintenance. In maintenance the role identity is "me". The self-label has been internalized and role-person merger peaks (Becker 1960; 1963; Piliavin and

Callero 1991). Having developed an insider's perspective (Donnelly and Young 1988; Piliavin, Evans, and Callero 1984; Wheaton 2000), a person can read the subcultural landscape and can recognize behaviors and symbols that characterize expertise. For example, callused and cracked heels are symbols veteran river runners use to infer identity cultivation stage (Fletcher 1997). Identity veterans continually refine consumption constellations and reconfirm the identity via established social ties. Self-completing behavior is less evident (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981; 1982). Although accumulation of possessions, media, and social ties continues, those stimuli decline in importance to self-definition.

Identity maintenance may endure for a lengthy period of time, lapse into latency, or fall into disposition. Latency involves putting an identity "on the shelf" for a limited time but eventually returning to the identity behaviors. Disposition is a permanent ending of identity enactment.

Identity Disposition. Identity disengagement occurs by choice or external force. Something prompts the question, "Is it time to stop doing this?" or "Is this still me?" (Piliavin and Callero 1991). Role-person merger falls during disposition. In early disposition the person intends to withdraw, but continues a reduced set of identity behaviors. Advanced disposition is marked by reduction or cessation of identity-related activities. Self-perceptions indicating "I am no longer that type of person" accompany declining reflected appraisals, as does reduced social interaction related to the identity, and fewer role-related material investments. For purposes of this study, the focus is in early disposition involving intentions to engage less frequently in identity-related

activities.

Importance to Self. The role-identity cultivation model just described traces the progression of a single role-identity. This progression is contextualized within the portfolio of role-identities comprising the global self. The proposed model does not require that a person ever become highly committed to an identity. For example, one of the authors has been a teapot collector for many years. Asked to describe herself, the author would rarely invoke the teapot collector identity. Nonetheless, this peripheral role-identity influences how family and friends interact with her, especially with regard to gift-giving.² References in this paper to “greater role-person merger” or “less role-person merger” mean that the importance to the individual of a given role-identity is greater or less than it was at an earlier point in time.

Detecting Role-Identity Cultivation Phase

Asking people for knowledge, performance expertise, or how long they have enacted a particular role is not the best way to identify an individual’s current phase of

² Note how the role-identity “teapot collector” implies and reflects ongoing patterns of social interaction. As an aside, it was social interaction (gift receipt) that set the author’s teapot-collector identity discovery in motion, in a manner similar to McCracken’s (1988) one-thing-leads-to-another Diderot effect. External influences arising through social interaction initiated and perpetuate the teapot collector identity.

identity cultivation. Intentions for future identity enactment provide a more direct way to identify stages of identity development. Stages are defined by the person's self-perceptions and plans for future cultivation directed toward achieving their identity-ideal. Has the person just begun to explore the identity (discovery)? Is the person actively cultivating the identity, but wishes to cultivate it much more (construction)? Has the person reached a point where she feels comfortable with her level of participation (maintenance)? Or, does the person anticipate declining participation and interest in the role-related activities (decline)?

Consider two cyclists, both fitting the description of the identity construction phase. The role-identity-ideal schema (Kleine, et al. 1993) of one includes competing in the rigorous 116 mile Tour de Tucson. The other cyclist is equally committed to a less demanding goal--a weekly ride with friends down the ten mile Slippery Elm bike path. Despite their differing goals, each cyclist is at the construction phase in which people strive toward unmet identity ideals. Thus, uncovering a person's intentions for future identity pursuit provides the most direct way to detect stage of identity cultivation.

Role-Identity Cultivation vs. Life Cycle Development and Aging

Life-cycle or life-stage theories (e.g., Erikson 1956) portray universal, age-associated phases of global identity development spanning a life time. The role-identity cultivation model involves a single, freely chosen role-identity independent of self-developmental phase or chronological age (e.g., early adulthood).

Identity cultivation may begin at any age, assuming possession of adequate skills.

The celebrated folk artist Anna Mary Robertson Moses (a.k.a. Grandma Moses) first explored painting in her 70s. Regionalist artist and portraitist J.P. Olmes began cultivating the artist identity in his 20s. Although 50 years of life experience separate the age when each initiated identity cultivation, we suggest that the structure of the identity cultivation process was similar for each artist. Consider a teenager and middle-aged individual struggling through beginner tennis lessons. Although their physical abilities, resources, and motivations may vary, their respective tennis player identities progress along similar paths.

Age or life stage may be associated with circumstances that inhibit identity progression, such as being unable to access necessary identity enabling commitments (e.g., possessions, social ties), being unable to fit the new identity into the role-identities already comprising the global self (e.g., overextended parent), or experiencing events that alter the identity supporting infrastructure. For example, younger and middle-aged adults may fall off the developmental path of a role-identity due to life status changes (Andreasen 1984) that precipitate the addition, subtraction, or dramatic modification of an existing role-identity (e.g., childbirth, career progression). Older adults, who are “empty nesters,” or retired, may have reached a point in life where pursuit of certain activities can begin, resume, or increase. Life-status changes can create openings for new identity cultivation or close on-going efforts. Age or life stage may predict the choice to pursue a particular role, yet the role-identity cultivation process applies regardless of age or life stage.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

In a cross-sectional study we examine three of the five identity cultivation stages: discovery, maintenance, and early disposition. As described above, while identity-related possessions and other elements of the identity-supporting infrastructure accumulate as the identity is pursued, the strength of the relationship between infrastructure elements and self-definition may fall. Viewed together, these two effects (quantity accumulated versus strength of relationship to self) provide a more comprehensive profile of how people use consumption for identity cultivation. See Figure 2 for a pictorial summary of the relationships to be tested.

Definitions and Hypotheses

The consumption constellation elements we examine here include identity-related possession commitments, identity-related social commitments, identity-related media commitments, and identity-related performances.

Possession Commitments. Cultivating a role-identity involves accumulating the related possessions that enable the identity and encourage reflected appraisals leading to role-person merger. The accumulated items are central to the identity activity (e.g., tennis racket) or peripheral (e.g., a tennis racket key chain). Material commitment to an identity begins in discovery and increases into the more stable, veteran maintenance stage. A person's inventory of identity related possessions should remain intact into early disposition when the decision to dispose of the identity is incomplete. Possession attachment (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995) may inhibit dispossessing the role-related

possessions in early disposition, as well. Applying this to a cross-sectional sample, we expect that:

H1: The extensiveness of individuals' identity-related possession clusters will be lower for individuals in discovery than maintenance and the same in maintenance versus early disposition.

Social Commitments. Identity-related social commitments (the extensiveness or number of social ties associated with a given social identity) represent accumulated interactional commitment to an identity (Serpe 1987). Social commitments comprise a symbolic group, such as the collectivity of tennis players known to the individual (e.g., Burke and Reitzes 1981; Callero 1985; Callero, et al. 1987; Piliavin and Callero 1991; Stryker 1980). Social commitments do not have to be members of a specific, formal group (e.g., members of a particular tennis club).

Social ties serve at least two important purposes. First, social ties keep people connected to the role-identity because the loss of them makes it psychologically more costly to quit (Becker 1960; 1963; Piliavin and Callero 1991). Social commitments “tie the central related activity to the fabric of a person’s social life” (Piliavin and Callero 1991, p. 66), as aerobics participant Betty indicates:

You become friends with people. There are regular people that go all of the time. I know probably like ten people that come all of the time that I

say hi to and stuff. People that I was a freshman with and now they're seniors . . . A couple I have become really good friends with.

Two, social ties shape and support a person's self-definition-in-role (Becker 1960; 1963; Piliavin and Callero 1991; Solomon 1983). Social ties form a social web supporting identity enactment, a function evident in this quote by aerobics participant Betty:

Aerobics is fun because you are with other people, you meet people. It is social and everything like that and that is nice. I like meeting new and interesting people. Another thing is it keeps you motivated, if you are supposed to meet a friend there, or you stay motivated from the other people you see in class. This keeps you motivated to keep going, that's why other people are so important.

The more extensive a person's social ties, the more opportunities he or she has to learn about, enact, and receive feedback about his or her identity attempts (Serpe 1987; Shibutani 1962; Stryker 1980). Conversely, declining social ties discourage continued identity pursuit (Kleine and Kleine 2000; Stokowski and Lee 1991). Thus, the extent of a person's social relationships affects what he or she can become. People tend to accumulate social commitments increasing from discovery to the more stable maintenance phase when the veteran's identity-related social commitments tend to be established (Piliavin and Callero 1991). Social ties should also persist into the early

disposition phase before full identity disposition occurs. Applying this to a cross-sectional sample, we expect that:

H2: Identity-related social ties will be less extensive for individuals in discovery versus maintenance, but remain the same for those in maintenance versus early disposition.

Media Commitments. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, media are extension of identity-related social networks (Englis, Solomon, and Oloffson 1993; Kleine, et al. 1993). Media communications (e.g., magazines, newspapers, books, videos, and so forth) augment a person's identity-related knowledge and provide additional bases for evaluation of self in role (Richins 1991). Individuals in the discovery stage are likely to explore various role-related media. In contrast, people with more experience in maintenance consume less role-related media. For example, Solomon and Douglas (1987) found that experienced female business professionals relied less on business sources about how to dress professionally because they possessed knowledge about role appropriate behavior. Aerobics participant Susan describes how media consumption varies by identity stage:

I used to read everything I could . . . Now if I see something I will read it, but I don't go looking for stuff. But, if I see something [about aerobics] I will read it because it is interesting to me, but I feel like I know most of

the stuff that is important to know.

In early-disposition attention is shifted away from identity related information. This implies that identity-relevant media consumption will decline in extensiveness from discovery to maintenance to early-disposition. Applying this to cross-sectional data, we hypothesize that:

H3: Identity-relevant media consumption extensiveness will be highest for individuals in discovery, lower for those in maintenance, and again lower between maintenance and early-disposition.

***Identity-Related Appraisals.* Reflected appraisals, often known as the looking glass self, are a person's perception of how identity-relevant others evaluate him or her in role (Laverie, et al. 2002; Solomon 1983). Here we examine two kinds of appraisals: reflected appraisals of identity-related performance and reflected appraisals of identity-related possessions. Why separate these two types? Possessions and performance behavior are complements that can be cultivated independently and each communicates unique information about one's self in role (Laverie 1995; Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine 2000; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Moreover, possessions and performance are used differently by identity rookies and veterans (Donnelly and Young 1988; Wheaton 2000; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Also, the two kinds of appraisal are empirically discriminant (Laverie 1995;**

Laverie, et al. 2002).

Positive appraisals encourage identity internalization while negative appraisals discourage it (Burke and Tully 1977; Callero 1985; Hoelter 1983; Kleine, et al. 1993; Laverie, et al. 2002; Solomon 1983; Stryker 1980). To reach the maintenance stage, a person must accumulate positive appraisals so appraisal valence should become more favorable from discovery through maintenance. In disposition, appraisals should become less favorable, however this decline may be small and insignificant in early disposition.

For a cross-sectional sample we hypothesize that:

H4: The valence of performance appraisals and possession appraisals will be more favorable for individuals in maintenance compared to discovery, but will be similar between the maintenance and early disposition stages.

Identity-Related Emotions: Pride and Shame

The appraisal process includes both cognitive and emotional responses (Frijda 1986; Frijda, Kurpers, and Schure 1989; Lazarus 1984; Parkinson and Manstead 1992; Roseman 1984; Shott 1979; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Following theorizing and empirical work in appraisal theory, we apply the two primary social emotions: pride and shame (Heise 1979; Laverie 1995; Scheff 1991). Pride and shame are signals to the self regarding how well others accept our identity claims and affect how we view ourselves (Rosenberg 1979; Scheff 1991; Shott 1979). More identity-related pride encourages identity pursuit and leads to greater identity importance (Laverie 1995; Heise 1979;

Stryker 1980). Identity-related shame has opposite effects. As with appraisals, we distinguish possession-related emotions from performance-related emotions resulting in four types: pride in possessions, pride in performance, shame in possessions, and shame in performance.

We expect that pride will be higher in maintenance than in discovery as people accumulate greater evidence of identity competence and internalize the role. The characteristic lack of experience in discovery may lead to more shame than in maintenance. As the individual disconnects him or her self from the identity, i.e., “what I was” rather than “what I am” emotional valence changes should occur. However, pride may linger for those in early disposition due to having prior successes to reflect upon. Thus, we may not observe a significant difference in pride between early disposition and the other stages. However, early disposition should be accompanied by a level of shame higher than at maintenance.

To summarize, identity related pride should increase from discovery to maintenance and then plateau between maintenance and early disposition. Identity-related shame will decrease from discovery to maintenance and from maintenance to early disposition. Applied to a cross-sectional sample, we hypothesize that:

H5a: Identity-related pride will be lower for individuals in discovery than in maintenance, and the same for those in maintenance versus early disposition.

H5b: Identity related shame will be higher for individuals in discovery than in maintenance, and lower for those in maintenance versus early disposition.

Impact on Role-Person Merger

The association between role-person merger and social commitments, appraisals, and emotions indicates their self-relevance at each identity-development stage. People in early identity cultivation are more dependent upon external indicators for supporting emerging identities. As identities mature into maintenance, people rely less upon external indicators for their self-perceptions. For example, Solomon and Douglas (1987) found that more experienced (female) business professionals relied less upon external signs of their professional role to define themselves. Maintenance stage aerobics participant

Susan observed:

When people come in with their hair all done and perfect clothes all of the time, I am just generalizing and this is not judging anybody, but on the average I see them coming to the rec center to meet potential others, they're there to socialize, whereas the people who just come in in their t-shirts, in their simple leotards or whatever . . . they're hard core.

“Hard core” individuals are those with well established bases of experience and procedural “how to do it” knowledge. Veterans have accumulated more consumption

constellation elements, but they also possess knowledge of constellation contents and its appropriate use (Donnelly and Young 1988; Englis and Solomon 1995; Lowrey, et al. 2001; Solomon and Buchanan 1991; Wheaton 2000). They are committed, veteran members of the identity-relevant subculture who have internalized self-perceptions in role (Piliavin and Callero 1991; Wheaton 2000). The internalized self-perception and knowledge base leads veterans to be less dependent on external identity commitments for self-identification. Thus, we expect the accumulation of external identity commitments to decrease in their association with role-person merger across role-identity stages.

H6: The association between role-person merger and the external commitments (possessions, media, and social) will be higher at discovery than maintenance, and higher at maintenance than early disposition.

Using similar reasoning, we expect the same pattern to occur for reflected appraisals and appraisal generated emotions. Appraisals and their emotions originate externally. They should become less important to sustain role-identity self-definitions through the identity stages as people internalize the identities. We propose the following two hypotheses:

H7: The association between role-person merger and the appraisals (performance and possession) will be higher at discovery than maintenance, and higher at maintenance than early disposition.

H8: The association between role-person merger and the identity related emotions pride and shame will be higher at discovery than maintenance, and higher at maintenance than early disposition.

Summary

This study examines how role-identity cultivation stage moderates (1) the accumulation of identity reinforcing infrastructure (possession, social, and media commitments), appraisals, and emotions and (2) the importance of the infrastructure elements, appraisals, and emotions to self-perceptions in role. Generally, we expect that individuals who achieve the maintenance stage will have accumulated more signs of the identity (possessions, social ties, media), more positive reflected appraisals, and more pride/less shame than at discovery. Those in early disposition will tend to maintain the infrastructure as complete identity disengagement has not occurred. In contrast, the strength of the relationship between the infrastructure elements and role-person merger will be higher at discovery than at maintenance and early disposition. Empirical support for these expectations would suggest that to understand self and consumption we should include role-identity stage as a key moderator of self-consumption relationships.

METHOD

Overview

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect cross-sectional data from

individuals who participated in one of two freely chosen role-identity contexts (aerobics and tennis). We chose these contexts for several reasons. In contexts involving physical activities, it is relatively easy for individuals to clearly relate specific symbols to specific activities (e.g., tennis racket goes with tennis). It is easier for respondents to think about such roles as a distinct piece of their global selves, in contrast to family or career identities that permeate daily activities. Respondents at different role-identity stages are more easily identified and reached for study participation. Respondents also tend to enjoy talking about their experiences, yielding higher quality data. Finally, in these contexts it is easier for respondents to distinguish between possessions versus skills and abilities used to perform the activity.

Sample

A self-administered Participant Questionnaire was used to collect data in two athletic identity contexts: aerobics and tennis. Study packets were distributed to aerobics and tennis participants recruited at facilities located in a large Southwestern metro area. Each site was visited multiple times over a period of several weeks. Ninety-nine percent of those offered a study packet accepted. Each packet included a cover letter, a self-administered questionnaire, a postage-paid return envelope, and a raffle entry form as an incentive to participate. The cover letter explained that the questionnaire would ask respondents about things related to playing tennis (or doing aerobics). Respondents completed their questionnaires at home and returned them by mail.

We distributed 468 study packets to tennis players at private and municipal tennis facilities. Players were sampled from introductory lessons, club and city leagues, and tournaments to vary identity development stage. Tennis players returned 318 surveys (a 68 percent response rate); 213 contained data on all measures needed for analysis. Respondents varied from 16 to 77 years old ($\bar{x} = 37$ years, s.d., = 11.7), sixty percent were male, had played tennis for as little as one month up to 60 years ($\bar{x} = 10.7$ years, s.d. = 9.2), played tennis about twice a week, and owned an average of 50 (s.d. = 16.2) tennis identity-related possessions. Example possessions listed include: tennis rackets, balls, shoes, clothes, water bottles, athletic bags, and other accessories.

For the aerobics sample, we distributed 491 study packets at introductory, intermediate, and advanced level aerobics classes to very identity stage development. Of the 359 surveys returned (a 73 percent response rate), 329 had data on all measures. Respondents ranged in age from 21 to 66 years ($\bar{x} = 35$, s.d. = 9.7), 83 percent were female, took aerobics classes about twice a week, had pursued aerobics for 10.5 years on average (s.d. = 8.8; range from one month to 32 years), and owned an average of 33 (s.d. = 11.2) aerobics related possessions. In the depth interviews conducted with aerobics participants before the survey, participants listed possessions such as shoes, clothes, sports bras, water bottles, dynabands, tubes, weights, shower kits, and duffle bags. Similar possessions were identified by survey respondents.

We combined the tennis and aerobics data to enhance power and reliability. Fifteen percent of respondents are at the discovery phase of the identity project life cycle, 71% at the maintenance stage, and 12% at the early disposition stage. This distribution

reflects the reality that of those cultivating an identity at any given point, more are maintaining the identity than are developing or disposing the identity. Although this uneven distribution of the sample across stages will affect statistical power, we have no reason to believe it will bias parameter estimates. The mean age in years for discovery is 33 (s.d.= 8.6), for maintenance is 38 (s.d. = 9.1), and for early disposition is 35 (s.d. = 12.6), demonstrating that identity life cycle stage does not necessarily correspond to physical age for reasons discussed above.

Measures

Identical measures were used across the two contexts with appropriate adaptations in directions and prompts. Below we present the items as worded on the “Tennis Player” questionnaire.

Identity Stage. An individual’s location within the identity stages – discovery, maintenance, and early disposition -- was measured by having respondents select the one statement that best describes her intentions for the future as a tennis participant. Respondents selected one of the following statements: “Tennis is something I am just getting into. In the next few months, I don’t know if I will do this activity more than I do now” (discovery); “I have played tennis at the same level of participation for a while. In the next few months I plan on doing this activity as often as I do it now” (maintenance); “I used to play tennis a lot, but I do not participate in it as much as I used to. In the next few months I plan on doing this activity less often than I do now” (early disposition).

The measure is based on theory and recommendations from Donnelly and Young (1988), Piliavin and Callero (1991), and Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1981; 1982).

Possessions, Social, and Media Commitments. The hypotheses call for examining the accumulation, or extensiveness, of possession, social, and media commitments as opposed to their specific content or symbolic properties (although the latter would be interesting to explore in the future). Measuring commitment extensiveness has precedence in the social identity literature (Hoelter 1983; Serpe 1987).

The following measures of possession, social, and media commitments are adapted from Kleine, et al. (1993) and Laverie, et al. (2002). For possession commitments, we assessed two aspects of possession extensiveness: number of identity related possessions and number of identity related product categories. We advanced no hypothesis about product categories, yet including this variable may yield useful information. Number of identity-related product categories was assessed by asking respondents to “list things that you personally have because you play tennis.” The sum of identity related product categories listed indicates product category extensiveness. For each product category listed (e.g., tennis shoes), respondents indicated the number of identity related possessions owned within that category (e.g., 6 pairs). Possession set extensiveness (possession commitment) is indicated by summing the number of possessions owned across all categories listed.

To measure social commitment extensiveness, respondents reported “the number of people you know on a first name basis from playing tennis.” The number of people listed indicates the extensiveness of identity-related social ties (Kleine, et al. 1993; Serpe

1987). A larger number indicates greater accumulation of social ties.

To indicate media commitment, respondents were asked to “list any magazines, TV shows, videos, etc., that you pay attention to because they are related to tennis.” The various media listed were summed to yield an indicator for media commitments accumulated.

Appraisals. A multi-indicator measure for appraisals was developed and validated via a series of pretests.³ The adjective pair indicators of appraisal are: notable/ordinary, excellent/poor, spectacular/terrible. A 7-point bipolar scale assessed each appraisal indicator; a higher number indicates more favorable appraisal.

This prompt elicited reflected appraisals of possessions and reflected appraisals of performance: “think about the comments that other people make about your tennis equipment (performance). Use the adjective pairs below to describe what other people that you play tennis with say about your products (performance).”

Pride and Shame. Pride in possessions and pride in performance are each measured with a 3-item scale adapted from Lewis (1971) and tested successfully in a consumption context (Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine 1993). The indicators for pride are: self-esteem, self-regard, and pride. Shame in possessions and shame in performance were measured with these three items: humiliated, embarrassed, and ashamed.

³ Details of the appraisal measure development process are available from the authors.

Respondents rated their emotions on a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from very much so (7) to not at all (1).

To elicit the possession related emotions, respondents were first prompted with, "How do you feel about the products that you use for tennis?" Followed by: "The products I use for tennis make me feel. . ." The indicators for pride and shame followed. Similarly, after being prompted to think about their performance as a tennis player, participants reacted to: "When I think of myself as a tennis player I feel. . ." Again, the pride and shame indicators followed.

Role-Person Merger. Role-person merger was measured using a three-item version of Callero's (1985; Callero, et al. 1987) scale and similar to the one successfully applied in another consumption context (Kleine, et al. 1993). Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale that ranged from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1). Respondents were asked to report "how important tennis is to you" using these items: "Playing tennis is something I rarely even think about" (reverse scored); "Tennis is an important part of who I am"; and "I don't really have any clear feelings about tennis" (reverse scored).

Participation Frequency. To measure participation in tennis, respondents were asked to indicate how often they played tennis by checking one of the following seven items: at least once a year; at least once every six months; at least once a month; at least once a week; at least two times a week; at least three times a week; at least once a day.

ANALYSIS

Measure Evaluation

Confirmatory factor analysis procedures supported the reliability and validity of the multi-item measures and the appropriateness of collapsing the data across the two contexts. Equivalency of parameter estimates for measurement models estimated from the data for each context was evaluated by a series of nested two-group confirmatory factor analyses. For these analyses, factor variances were specified as free. To identify each multi indicator factor, one factor loading was set equal to 1.0. The two-group CFA was initially estimated with all parameters freely estimated ($\chi^2 = 1445.1, df=720, p < .0001$; CFI=.94; NNFI =.92; RMSEA=.043). Next, we constrained factor loadings as equal across the two groups and found they do not differ ($\chi^2 = 1456.1, df=738, p < .0001$; CFI=.94; NFI = .92; $\chi^2_d=11.6, df=18, p>.01$). We then specified that indicator residuals must also be equal across groups. Residual estimates appear equivalent across groups ($\chi^2 = 1498.6, df=765, p < .0001$; CFI=.94; NNFI = .92; $\chi^2_d=41.9, df=27, p>.01$). Finally, we added the constraint that covariances among the latent factors must be equivalent across groups. Again, we find no evidence that parameter estimates differ across the two groups ($\chi^2 = 1545.9, df=856, p < .0001$; CFI=.94; NNFI = .93; $\chi^2_d=47.3, df=91, p>.01$). In conclusion, there is no statistically significant difference between the fit of the two group model, with no constraints imposed across groups, versus when the model is fit with all parameter estimates constrained as equal across the

two groups ($\chi^2_d=100.8, df=136, p>.01$). Parameter estimates for the measurement models are equal in the two groups. Having no compelling reason to analyze the data from each group separately, we pooled the data for increased power and greater results stability.⁴

Stage Measure Predictive Validity

To obtain some evidence of the identity cultivation stage measure's predictive validity, the average frequency of identity related behavior was compared across levels of identity stage. Average length of enacting the identity is lowest at discovery, highest in maintenance, and not different from maintenance at early disposition (see Table 1). Participants also reported how long they had been playing tennis or doing aerobics (converted to number of months). As one would expect, average frequency of identity-related behavior is greater at maintenance than discovery, but not early disposition (see Table 1). Finally, role-person merger is lowest at discovery, significantly higher at

⁴ To fulfill curiosity, we did analyze data for the two contexts separately. The result patterns from those analyses largely replicate the findings reported for the combined data sets. Reporting the pooled data has the additional benefit of reinforcing that the identity cultivation process is the central focus, and not the specific contexts from which the data were obtained.

maintenance and early disposition. Role-person merger is slightly, but not significantly, lower at early disposition than maintenance (Table 1). Thus, role-person merger fits the pattern expected with this sample.

Hypothesis Test Protocol

Hypotheses examine identity cultivation stage as a moderator of commitment extensiveness, appraisal and emotion valences, and also of identity-relevance. Planned contrasts were applied to assess variation in extensiveness. To test how identity cultivation stage moderates identity relevance, regression models were estimated in which the focal construct (e.g., possession commitments), identity stage, and their interaction, were specified as predictors of role-person merger (SAS PROC GLM). In every analysis, the interaction effect was significant ($p < .05$). This provides evidence that the relationship between each construct (e.g., possession commitment) and role-person merger varies by identity stage. This finding also indicates that association between role-person merger and each characteristic of identity cultivation should be examined within each stage. The association (regression coefficient) between role-person merger and each identity property examined is interpreted as a measure of self-relevance; the stronger the association (larger the regression coefficient) the greater the self- or identity-relevance.

To assess variability of self-relevance across role-identity cultivation stages, the relationship between each predictor construct and role-person merger was estimated for each level of identity stage (SAS PROC REG). These regression coefficients can be

interpreted as a measure of strength of identity-relevance; the degree to which role-person merger depends upon each sign of identity cultivation. We followed Pedhazur's (1982, p. 28) recommended procedures for comparing the relative magnitude of regression coefficients across levels of identity cycle stage. See Table 2 for these results.

RESULTS

External Commitments

Planned contrasts ($p \leq .05$) reveal that each variety of external commitment – number of identity related possessions, number of identity related possession categories, number of identity related social commitments, and number of media commitments-- increases significantly from discovery to maintenance (H1, H2, and H3; see Table 1 and Figure 4). Contrasts show no significant differences between maintenance and early disposition for number of identity related possessions, media, or social commitments. However, the reported number of product categories owned is significantly lower at early disposition. Thus, with the exception of product categories, the general pattern is for commitment levels to be significantly greater at maintenance than at discovery. The differences from maintenance to early disposition are nonsignificant, consistent with early disposers anticipating declining involvement. The result pattern supports hypotheses 1 and 2. Hypothesis 3 proposed that media commitments would decline from discovery to maintenance to early disposition. This was not supported because media

commitments increased significantly from discovery to maintenance with no significant difference between maintenance and early disposition. The media commitment measure evidences a range restriction weakness which may have attenuated power to detect significance in the nominal decline (2.7 to 2.5, see Table 1) from maintenance to early disposition.

Identity Relevance of the Commitment Variables. Social commitments and identity-relevant possessions are more strongly associated ($p < .05$) with role-person merger at the discovery stage than at maintenance ($p < .05$; H6; see Table 2 and Figure 7). Neither evidence variation between the maintenance and early disposition stages. The identity-relevance of media commitments and role-person merger evidences a nominal pattern similar to possessions and social commitments, but does not vary significantly between any of the stages. This null finding may be due to the attenuating effect of range restriction; media consumption is uniformly low (see Table 1). Thus, the general pattern observed with external identity commitments is that, with the exception of media, the association with role-person merger is greatest at discovery. That is, social and possession commitments have their strongest connection to role-person merger early on in identity cultivation, prior to internalizing a stable self-description related to the identity and before formulating enduring evidence of the identity claim.

Appraisals of Possessions and Performance

Planned contrasts show for each appraisal type that the lowest mean occurs at the discovery stage. Appraisals of both possessions and performance rise significantly

from discovery to maintenance. Appraisals do not differ significantly between maintenance and early disposition. This pattern supports H4 (see Table 1 and Figure 5).

The identity-relevance of reflected appraisals of possessions and performance generally evidence the predicted monotonic decline across the identity life cycle stages (H7; see Table 2 and Figure 8). The single exception is a non-significant contrast for reflected appraisals of possessions between the discovery and maintenance stages. The general pattern is for appraisals to decline in identity relevance as identity cultivation progresses and the identity internalized.

Emotions Toward Possessions and Performance

The means for pride in possessions, pride in performance, shame in possessions, and shame in performance all vary significantly between discovery and maintenance. Pride is greater and shame lower at maintenance than at discovery. (H5; see Table 1; Figure 6). Comparing maintenance and early disposition, pride in possessions and performance are unchanged while both shame in possessions and performance increase. This increase in perceived shame may illuminate why dissociation with the identity occurs.

Identity relevance of pride in possessions, pride in performance, and shame in possessions (H8) is highest at discovery, significantly lower at maintenance, and significantly lower again at early disposition (see Table 2 and Figure 9). Shame in performance does not differ between discovery and maintenance, but does differ significantly between maintenance and early disposition. Only pride in performance

shows a significant association with role-person merger at early disposition.

DISCUSSION

In this project we explored how role-identity cultivation stage moderates (1) the accumulation of an identity reinforcing infrastructure (possession, social, and media commitments), appraisals, and emotions, and (2) the importance of the infrastructure elements, appraisals, and emotions to self-perceptions in role. We examined variations across three stages: role-identity discovery, maintenance, and early disposition in the context of two freely chosen role-identities. On the whole, the data support our expectations.

Accumulation of commitments, appraisals, and emotions

Generally, results showed that individuals reaching the maintenance stage of role-identity cultivation had accumulated more commitments to the identity (possessions, social ties, media), more positive reflected appraisals, and more pride/less shame than at discovery. In early disposition, prior to full role disengagement, respondents tended to have fewer infrastructure elements than at maintenance, but this difference was usually insignificant. Reflected appraisals (possessions and performance related) and pride remained positive into early disposition. However, sition shame was significantly greater, suggesting that early disposition involves questioning one's self in role and possible embarrassment of declining ability to fulfill identity-related obligations. Thus, external identity commitments, appraisals, and resulting emotions accumulate as an identity is

cultivated and reconfirmed. When identity disconfirmation sets in, one's investment in external identity commitments tends to fall nominally but not significantly, and pride lingers. An increase in shame at early disposition is the tell-tale sign of a forthcoming decline in the role-identity.

Importance to self

The association of the identity-related commitments, appraisals, and emotions with role-person merger yields a different picture. External identity commitments (possession, social, and media commitments) remain significant predictors of role-person merger throughout the role-identity life cycle, at least into maintenance. However, their importance to self-definition tends to be strongest at discovery and then to decline as self-representation-in-role develops and stabilizes in maturity. Similar results occurred with appraisals and emotions. The importance of appraisals to self-definition was lower at maintenance than in discovery. During maintenance, when pride is highest and shame lowest, the emotions have the weakest association with role-person merger.

The results suggest that as external commitments (possessions, social, and media), appraisals, and emotions become more supportive (more favorable) of the identity, they also become less important to its maintenance. As the internal representation of self-in-role develops, the external signs and commitments of that self-definition become less potent cues of role-related self-definition.

Generalizability

The results most likely generalize to other freely chosen leisure activity identities, but may also apply to other freely chosen role-identities (e.g., vegetarian, collector, alternative health care consumer). Ascribed role-identities such as gender, racial status, or ethnic identities may not fit the conceptual assertions or empirical results described here.

The proposed identity life-cycle stages do not have precise boundaries. Thus, there is most likely some misclassification error in placing respondents in one stage or another. Also, because the sample is cross-sectional we can infer, but cannot be conclusive about, how individuals change from stage to stage. Our findings are consistent with general patterns observed in data collected in very different identity contexts (e.g., Donnelly and Young 1988) and with a longitudinal study (Piliavin and Callero 1991). Longitudinal investigation of the relationships would strengthen confidence in the results. Also, experimentation examining cognitive changes across stages could further validate the stage measure.

A significantly larger chunk of the sample fell into the maintenance stage than discovery or early disposition. Any problems this uneven distribution caused are probably captured in attenuated statistical power. For example, had we more power for the early disposition stage a few more significant differences may have been found. Even so, it is difficult to imagine that the general data pattern would change significantly.

The social commitment construct measures capture the sheer weight of accumulated possession sets, media, and social ties. Quantitative measures of social connections are established for measuring accumulation and self-impact of commitments (Hoelter 1983; Kleine, et al. 1993; Laverie, et al. 2002). Englis and Solomon (1995) also used an extensiveness measure to capture consumption constellation development. It would be interesting to examine how role-identity stage moderates the qualitative impact external commitments (including brands) have on self.

Finally, the results should not be generalized to material possession attachment variation across identity stages. Attachment is an emotional bond that grows as a history develops between self and object (Kleine, et al. 1995). We have examined neither emotional bonds to possessions nor the self-relevance of individual possessions but instead the use of possession sets to prop up an identity. These results do not indicate when attachment bonds rise or drop.

Identity-Life Cycle Stage: A Key Moderator

Person-Possession Relationships. Consistent with prior studies (Englis and Solomon 1995; Lowery, et al. 2001; Solomon and Douglas 1987), the results suggest that a person's relationship with particular possessions, brand names, and other symbolic indicators of role-identity will vary from stage to stage. How important and symbolically useful are particular possessions or brands as self-symbols at each stage of identity development? Are person-brand relationships (Fournier 1998), or brand loyalty and commitment, moderated by identity stage? Does membership or involvement in brand-

communities (e.g., Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) fit a role-identity life cycle pattern? How does material possession attachment vary by role-identity stage?

Dispossession of material goods remains an understudied domain of consumer behavior. Identity change precipitates goods dispossession and consumers use dispossession to facilitate identity changes (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Gentry, Baker, and Kraft 1995; McAlexander 1991; Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000; Sayre 1994; Young and Wallendorf 1989). It may be useful to understand the changes in external identity commitments, appraisals, and emotions that accompany the dispossession of role-related goods.

Attitude Relationships. In the context of voluntary blood donation, attitudes toward donation have a differential impact on future donation behavior, depending upon whether the donor is a rookie or an experienced veteran (Allen, et al.1992; Piliavin and Callero 1991). Consumers' attitudinal responses to persuasive messages for goods and services may correlate with identity development stage. Should persuasive message arguments be constructed differently, depending upon the target audience's role-identity development stage? The contemporary use of data-bases to track customers allows for classifying customers into identity developmental stages and to design value offerings accordingly.

Consumer Socialization. Investigations of consumption phenomena in role-identity transitions, role acquisition, and consumer socialization could include role-identity development stage as a variable to enhance understanding of the processes at work. How does the global self-concept accommodate acquisition of new role-identities

or the loss of existing ones? Can marketers apply role-identity development to urge target consumers into the self-reinforcing stage of maintenance? Can marketing offerings help preclude identity disposition by facilitating social commitments and positive feedback regarding one's self-in-role? Could marketers with multiple offerings migrate customers from one role-identity to a substitute (e.g., running to cycling)? Such investigations hold promise for illuminating the forces that lead to or de-stabilize a Diderot unity (McCracken 1988).

Identity Schema Across Stages. People have cognitive schemas for role-related consumption constellations (Lowrey, et al. 2001). Role-identity schemas include actual, stereotypical, and ideal images of a role-identity (Kleine, et al. 1993). How do each of these schemas vary across identity stages? When do schemas form or become unsettled? When do actual and ideal schemas converge or become disparate? What changes in schema relationships precedes role-disposition?

The results presented here encourage consumer researchers to pursue questions about how role-identity life cycle stage moderates the relationship between consumption behaviors, possessions, and self-definitions. Framing person-possession relations in the context of self-developmental stages should enhance our understanding of the relationship between consumption and self-conceptions.

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TABLE 1

**HOW BEHAVIOR FREQUENCY, POSSESSIONS, AND MEDIA DIFFER ACROSS GROUPS:
MEANS, (STANDARD DEVIATIONS), AND COMPARISON SUMMARY**

Dependent Construct	Identity cultivation stage			Comparison summary*
	Discovery (1)	Maintenance (2)	Early Disposition (3)	
Behavior Frequency	3.7 (1.9)	5.5 (0.8)	5.1 (1.1)	1<2≅3
How Long Done?	2.4 (3.39)	11.6 (8.94)	14.1 (7.99)	1<2≅3
Age	33 (8.6)	38 (9.1)	35 (12.6)	1<2≅3
Role-Person Merger	3.1 (1.80)	6.0 (1.23)	5.9 (0.74)	1<2≅3
Commitments				
Possessions (H1)	12.3 (8.7)	57.1 (49.9)	53.2 (54.6)	1<2≅3
Product Categories	5.0 (3.1)	11.0 (4.7)	7.9 (4.9)	1<2>3
Social Connections (H2)	8.0 (15.1)	22.1 (20.1)	24.8 (24.6)	1<2≅3
Media (H3)	1.5 (1.3)	2.7 (1.7)	2.5 (1.3)	1<2≅3
Reflected Appraisals (H4)				
Possessions	3.7 (1.7)	5.2 (1.1)	5.4 (.9)	1<2≅3
Performance	2.9 (1.0)	5.2 (1.0)	5.2 (1.0)	1<2≅3
Emotions (H5)				
Pride possessions	3.6 (2.0)	5.6 (1.2)	5.9 (1.2)	1<2≅3
Pride performance	3.3 (1.6)	6.1 (1.0)	5.6 (.8)	1<2≅3
Shame possessions	3.1 (1.6)	1.8 (1.0)	2.6 (.7)	1>2<3
Shame performance	3.7 (2.1)	1.9 (1.1)	3.0 (1.0)	1>2<3

* Under “comparison summary” a < or > indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$). A ≅ indicates a non-significant difference in

means.

TABLE 2

**HOW THE IDENTITY-RELEVANCE OF COMMITMENTS, APPRAISALS, AND EMOTIONS VARY ACROSS
IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGES: SUMMARY OF REGRESSION ANALYSES**

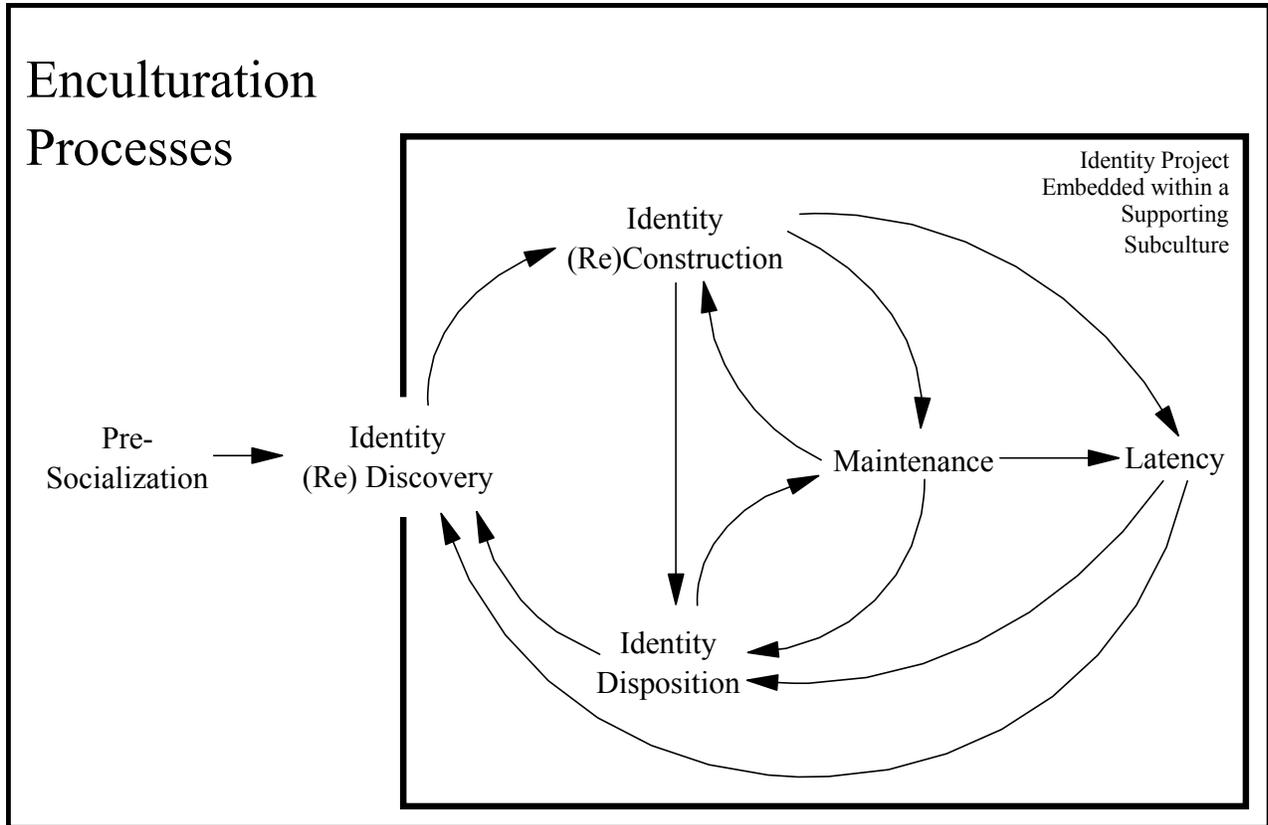
Predictor	Statistics	Identity stage			Planned comparison summary
		Discovery (1)	Maintenance (2)	Early Disposition (3)	
Social (H6)	b (std)	.05 (.41)	.006 (.10)	.008 (.27)	1>2≅3
	s.e.	.01	.003	.004	
	t	3.83	2.03	2.23	
Possessions (H6)	b (std)	.12 (.59)	.004 (.16)	.004 (.32)	1>2≅3
	s.e.	.02	.001	.002	
	t	6.22	3.05	2.66	
Media (H6)	b (std)	.47 (.33)	.13 (.18)	.10 (.19)	1≅2≅3
	s.e.	.18	0.4	.07	
	t	2.59	3.49	1.48	
Reflected appraisals of possessions (H7)	b (std)	0.55 (.55)	0.50 (.42)	-0.02* (-.03)	1≅2>3
	s.e.	0.10	0.06	0.10	
	t	5.53	9.02	-0.21	
Reflected appraisals of performance (H7)	b (std)	0.78 (.44)	0.52 (.42)	0.03* (.03)	1>2>3
	s.e.	0.18	0.06	0.13	
	t	4.29	9.05	0.21	
Pride in possessions (H8)	b (std)	0.72 (.80)	0.56 (.53)	-0.08* (-.13)	1>2>3
	s.e.	0.06	0.04	0.07	
	t	11.43	11.98	-1.02	

Pride in performance	b (std)	0.68 (.63)	0.63 (.50)	-0.23 (-.26)	1>2>3
	s.e.	0.1	0.06	0.11	
	t	6.9	11.27	-2.13	
Shame in possessions	b (std)	-0.76 (-.68)	-0.42 (-.33)	0.18* (.19)	1>2>3
	s.e.	0.09	0.06	0.12	
	t	-8.10	-6.84	1.46	
Shame in performance	b (std)	-0.42 (-.50)	-0.42 (-.36)	0.05* (.07)	1≅2>3
	s.e.	0.08	0.06	0.09	
	t	-4.98	-7.51	0.55	

* indicates a non-significant regression coefficient ($p \geq 0.05$).

FIGURE 1

A MODEL OF THE IDENTITY PROJECT LIFE CYCLE



NOTE: Figure 1 is reproduced with permission from Kleine and Kleine (2000). The present study is concerned with the identity discovery, maintenance, and early disposition phases only.

FIGURE 2

PICTORAL SUMMARY OF NOMOLOGICAL RELATIONS TESTED

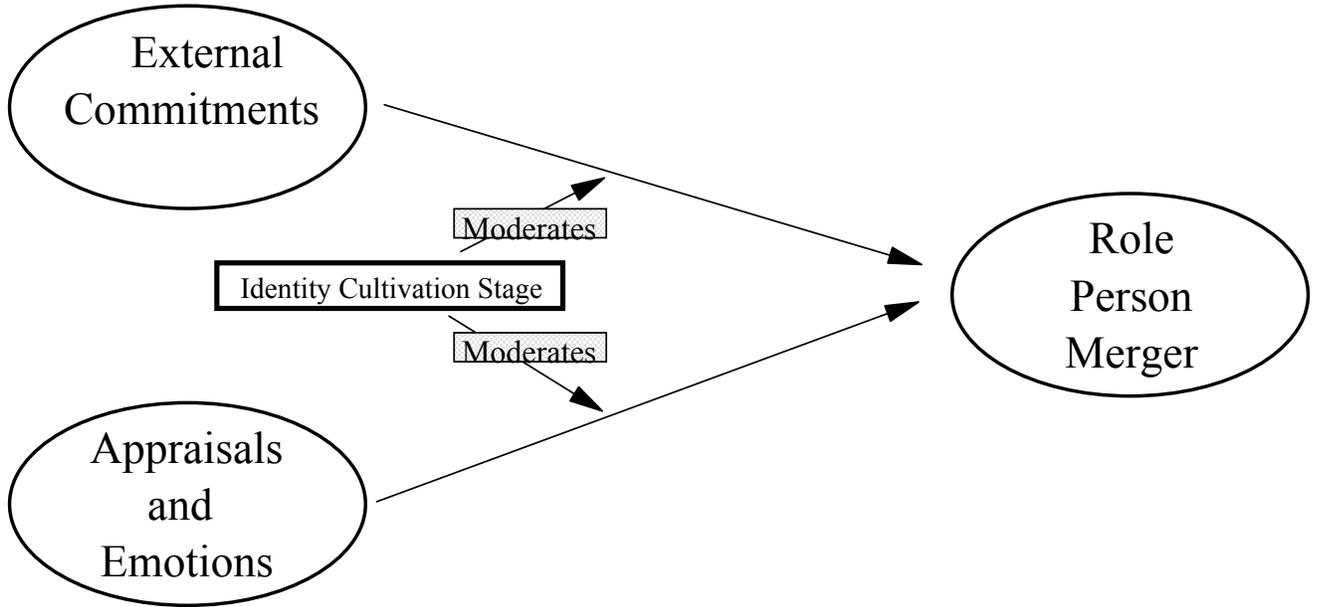


FIGURE 3

**ROLE-PERSON MERGER VARIATION ACROSS ROLE-IDENTITY CULTIVATION
STAGE (MEANS)**

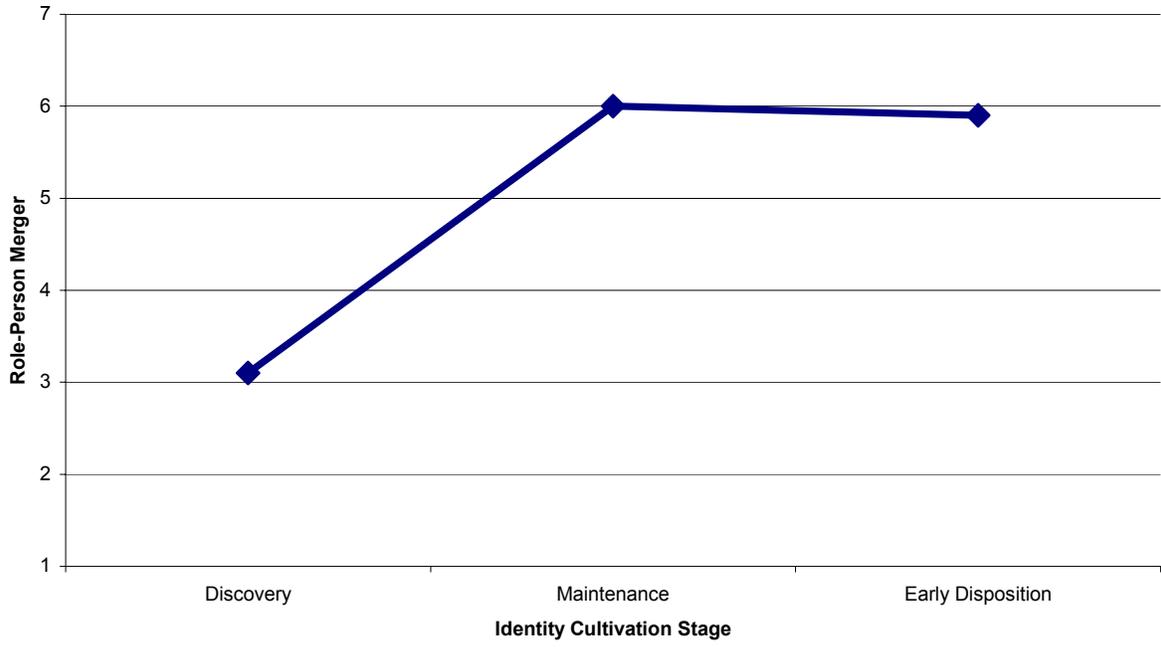


FIGURE 4

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS, POSSESSIONS, AND MEDIA VARIATION ACROSS ROLE-IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGE (MEANS)

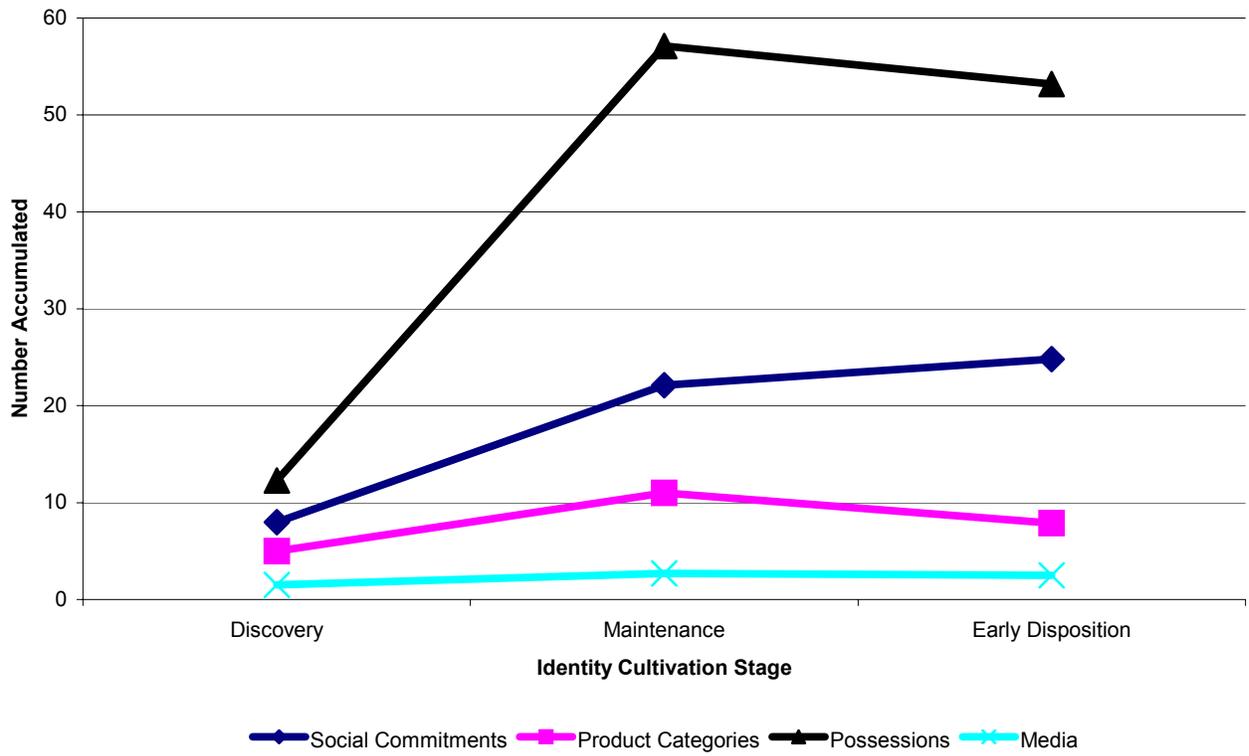


FIGURE 5

POSSESSION AND PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL VARIATION ACROSS ROLE-IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGE (MEANS)

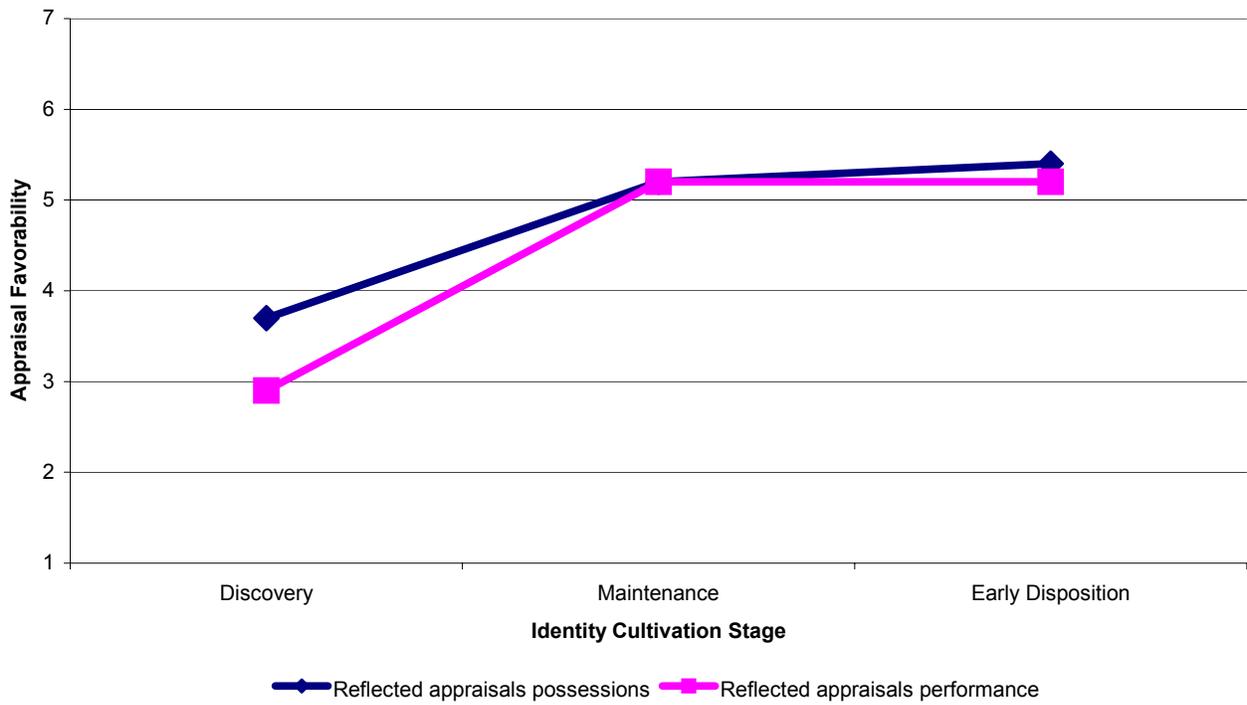


FIGURE 6

**PRIDE AND SHAME OF POSSESSIONS AND PERFORMANCE VARIATION ACROSS
ROLE-IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGE (MEANS)**

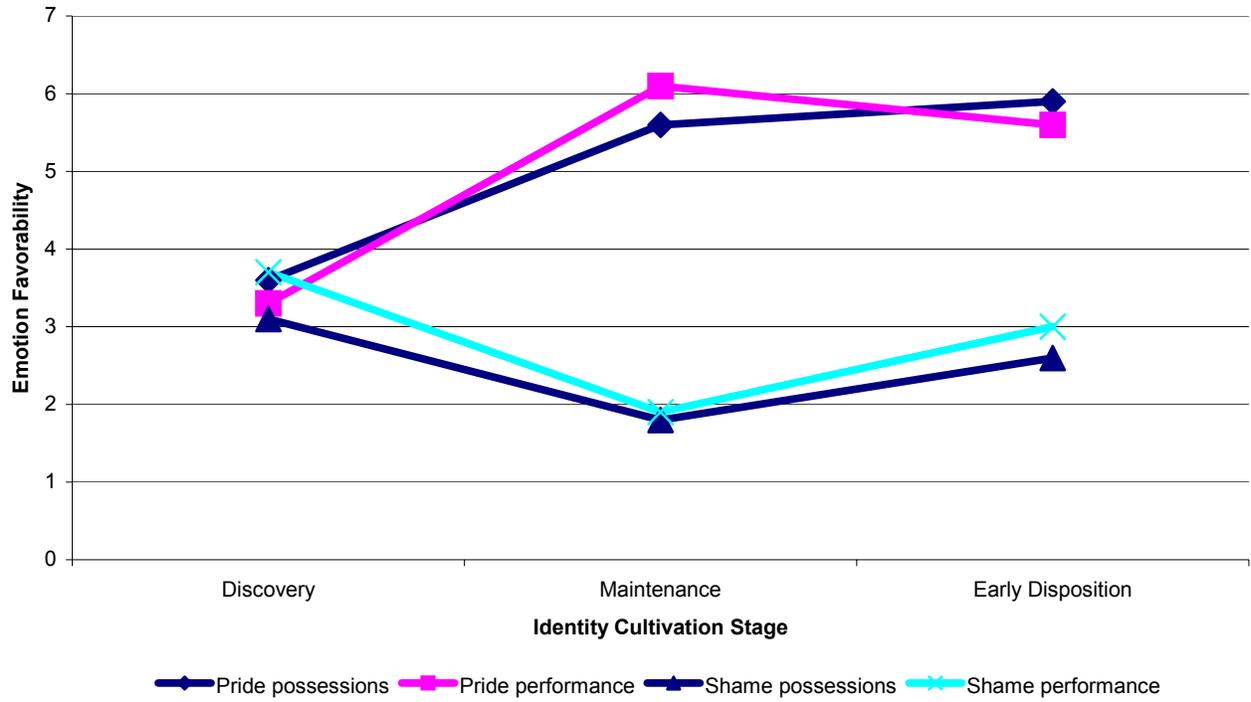


FIGURE 7

HOW IDENTITY RELEVANCE OF IDENTITY-RELATED SOCIAL CONNECTIONS, POSSESSIONS, AND MEDIA VARIES ACROSS IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGE

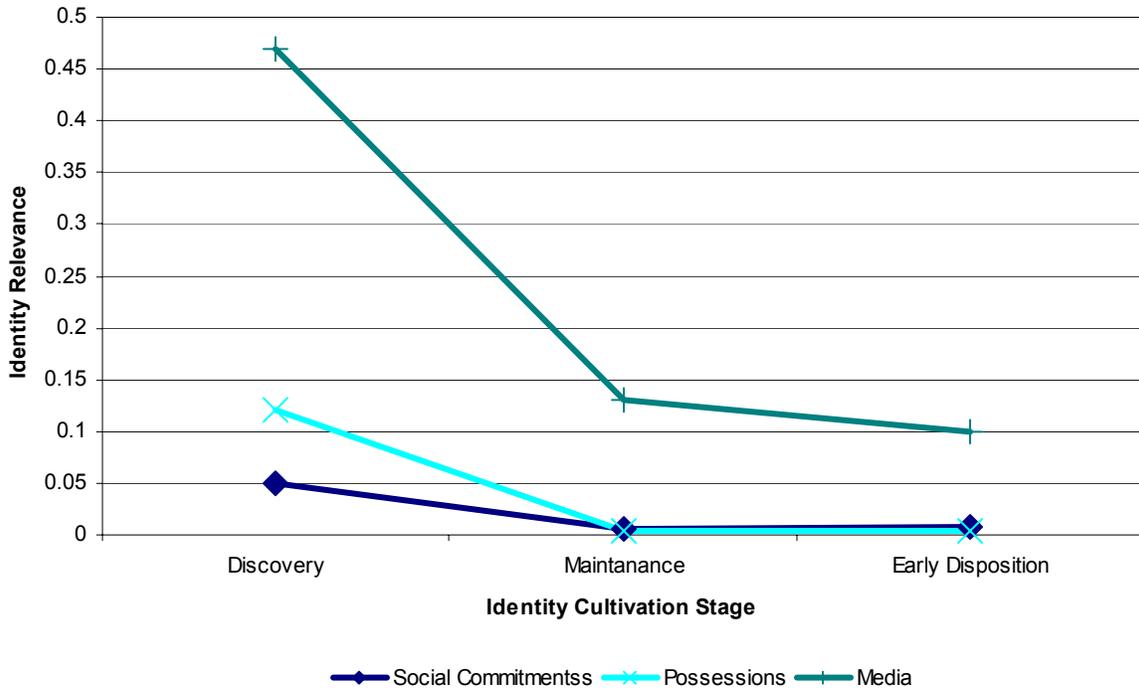


FIGURE 8

**HOW IDENTITY RELEVANCE OF POSSESSION AND PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL
VARY ACROSS IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGE**

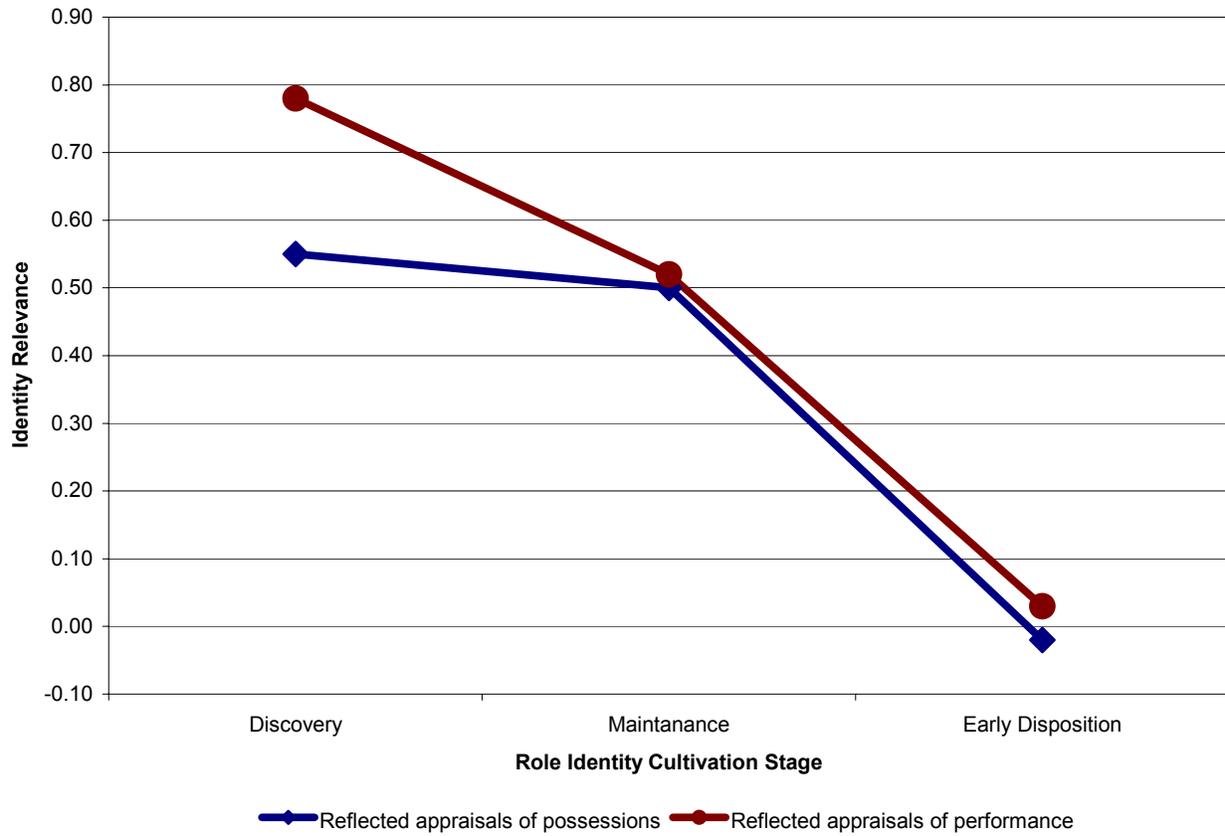


FIGURE 9

**HOW IDENTITY RELEVANCE OF POSSESSION AND PERFORMANCE EMOTIONS
VARY ACROSS IDENTITY CULTIVATION STAGE**

