

## Inconsistent Self-Views in the Control Identity Model

Jan E. Stets  
Washington State University

Peter J. Burke  
Washington State University

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### Abstract

One's control identity is the self-meanings associated with the degree to which a person has control over others. This study examines the implications of identity theory when the control identity is not in equilibrium, that is, when a person's self-perceptions are inconsistent with their control identity standard. Identity theory claims that when inconsistency occurs, people will act (often in exaggerated ways) to change perceptions to better match their identity standard. This is tested on two populations: college daters and newly married couples. We find in the first, exploratory study among daters that those whose self-conceptions involve frequently or infrequently controlling their partners (both extreme behaviors) have inconsistent self-views. In the second study, we confirm that those who have inconsistent self-views relevant to their control identity control their partner to a greater extent than those without these inconsistencies. We also examine some of the causes and consequences of the control identity. We find that individuals, in attempting to maintain their own control identity, create problems in their relationships: a self-society conflict.

# Inconsistent Self-Views in the Control Identity Model

## Introduction

Central to identity theory is the idea that identities are control systems that act to maintain congruency between perceptions of identity-relevant information (meanings) and meanings contained in the identity standard (Burke 1991). To do this, outputs (behavior) from the identity system that are themselves a function of the degree of inconsistency between the perceptions and the standard, act upon the environment to change it. These changes in the environment result in new perceptions of the identity relevant information that are closer to the identity standard.<sup>1</sup> Because the identity system is a *continuous* feedback loop, people are *always* perceiving and people are *always* acting. There is always movement toward the equilibrium state, but because of disturbances in the environment, that state is not always maintained.<sup>2</sup>

What happens if the identity system is not in full equilibrium? What if factors change some of the perceptions to be inconsistent with the meanings of the identity standard? Research to be discussed below suggests that people will act in a fashion that changes the perceptions toward being consistent with the standard. This often means that people will act in an "exaggerated" fashion to restore the meanings to a state of consistency. For example, consider a person who has a gender identity standard that is very feminine, but begins to have some perceptions of herself consistent with more masculine meanings. She is likely to exaggerate her feminine characteristics by acting in a more extremely feminine fashion in order to change her inconsistent self-perceptions toward being more feminine and thus congruent with her gender identity standard.

In this paper, we explore these ideas for a *personal identity* having to do with the level of control over others that people maintain. We call this personal identity a *control identity*. A

personal identity, as opposed to a role identity, is an identity that is tied to an individual rather than being attached to a role in society. We suggest that a personal identity like a control identity operates *across* various roles and situations.

We will examine persons who see themselves as very controlling and compare them to others who see themselves as controlling others very little if at all. Our logic suggests that these behavioral extremes are likely to be the result of inconsistencies in perceived self-meanings. This inconsistency influences people to act in an exaggerated manner (either very controlling or not at all controlling) so as to restore consistency between their perceptions and identity standard. For this we will use data from two studies: the first is a sample of daters and the second is a sample of newly married couples. We examine the dating sample in a more exploratory fashion to develop the measure of control identity, and using the married couple sample as a confirmatory test of our initial findings.

We also explore some of the causes and consequences of the self-perceptions relevant to the control identity in the two data sets in order to better understand the origins of such inconsistency and the effects they have for interaction. We are especially interested in the manner in which other control processes including self-monitoring, mastery or self-efficacy, and efficacy-based self-esteem influence perceived self-meanings of control of others. We are also interested in how one's control identity influences trust, perspective taking, and conflict in relationships. We think that the control identity may influence interactive processes which are critical to the development and maintenance of relationships.

### Background

We define control over others as the act of getting others to do something that they ordinarily would not have done. It is the behavioral side of power; it is the exercise of power, power use, or power in action (Cartwright 1959; Molm 1981; Wrong 1988).

Now, control of others is a fundamental process in interaction, thus a certain amount of control is expected among people (Cooley 1909; Goffman 1959; Mead 1934; McCall and Simmons 1978). Through the "looking-glass self," "role-taking," and "impression management," we control other's images of and behavior toward us so as to get what we want from them. Control of others also simultaneously involves control of the self. Further, control in interaction is reciprocal. Those who control others are also controlled by those others since they may have to modify their behavior to produce desired behavior in others (Sites 1975). In this way, no person is without control capability although there is variation in whether one intends to use that control, and there is variation in access to resources that may make one capable of controlling.

The kind of control we are examining here is different from the normal, "everyday" control that occurs in interaction. It is different both in its degree and consequences. First, the control that we are studying is control in its extreme or excessive form. Second, while some controlling behavior results in positive consequences for another, for example, making another laugh induces happiness, other controlling behavior results in negative consequences such as restricting another's activity. It is this latter consequence to which we attend, since, when taken to its extreme, it can become oppressive for the one being controlled and lead to dysfunctional interaction patterns.

Over time, people develop self-meanings regarding the degree to which they control others in situations. These self-meanings vary across individuals from a more fatalistic view of not at all being in control of others to a very efficacious view of being completely in control of others, with most people being somewhere in the middle. We call this set of self-meanings one's control identity. To understand the control identity, we need to review how the identity process operates.

According to identity theory, an identity process is composed of four parts as shown in Figure 1 (Burke 1991). The first part is the *identity standard* which is a set of self-meanings defining the character of the identity, that is, what it means to be who one is. Second is an *input function* consisting of perceptions of identity relevant meanings concerning who one is in a situation. It has the same dimensions of meaning as are contained in the standard. Thus, if the standard contains a self-definition in terms of being a certain degree of dominance and strength, the input function monitors the degree of dominance and strength one appears to have in a situation. Third is a *comparator*, which compares the perceived self-meanings with the meanings in the identity standard and indicates the difference between them (error). Finally, there is an *output function* that translates the error into meaningful actions and behaviors that act upon the social situation. These behaviors change the situation and the self-meanings that are perceived by the input function, thus completing the feedback loop. In a self-regulating fashion, the perceptions are controlled by the behavior to be congruent with the identity standard, thus minimizing the error output of the comparator. Individual behavior is thus a *joint* function of the perceptions (inputs) and the identity standard.

(Figure 1 about here)

Conceptualizing control identity in the above way, a control identity *standard* is the set of self-meanings concerning controlling others that serves as the reference value or standard of comparison in the identity process. It can also be thought of as the desired or goal state for the level of control. Each of us can be placed along a continuum of low to high dominance in our control identity, but most of us fall somewhere in the middle (Burger 1992). People perceive symbols pertaining to how much control they seem to have in situations, and they act to maintain the perceived level at the level set by their control identity standard. It is important to note that it is the *perceived meanings* that are controlled, *not* the actual behavior of controlling others. The

behavior of controlling others (to a greater or lesser extent) occurs to adjust the perceived self-meanings toward consistency with the identity standard.<sup>3</sup> For example, if a person has an identity standard which contains meanings consistent with being *moderately* controlling of others, but gets feedback from others the meaning of which implies that the person is *extremely* controlling, that person is then likely to reduce their level of control over others in an attempt to bring the perceived feedback (self-relevant meanings) in line with their control identity standard (cf. Swann and Hill 1982). It is this regulatory aspect that defines identities as different from general personality traits.

In this view, personality traits are constructs developed to account for consistent patterns of behavior over time (Wiggins and Pincus 1992). They are usually conceptualized as habitual dispositions to act in a certain manner that are acquired through learning and socialization. Behavior resulting from habit is not under self-control.<sup>4</sup> This is not a criticism of the concept of personality traits, but is meant only to highlight the feedback control process which is central to the concept of identity, and to distinguish the stability achieved through such feedback processes from the stability which is achieved in an S-R model through habituation. The former we are calling identities, the latter, traits. The point is not whether given characteristics are identities or traits, but whether they are maintained by a feedback control process. Given this distinction, for traits, the level of a behavior should be directly tied to the level of the trait, while for identities, the level of a behavior should be inversely tied to the *relationship* between the level of the identity standard and the level of the perceptions.

In this view, an identity is a feedback control process in which a set of self-meanings serve as a standard against which to compare self-relevant meanings in situations. Behaviors resulting from that comparison maintain the input of the feedback system. That a person's control identity is viewed as an identity has implications including that people use behavior to control

perceptions of the meanings concerning how much control they have; that they are, to a certain degree, committed to that control identity; and that the control identity is more or less salient in varying social situations. While we do not address issues of commitment or salience here, we *are* concerned with and address the issue of controlling the meanings concerning the level of control persons perceive themselves to have.

Conceptualizing the control identity as a control-process model is very similar to how self-monitoring has been recently conceptualized (Hoyle and Sowards 1993), or how control over others in relationships has been recently understood (Stets 1993). It is rooted in the idea that we regulate the level set by our standard, and that we do this by correcting "errors" or "discrepancies" in the system.

We focus on three important aspects of the control identity process. First, as outlined in the introduction, we examine the implications of identity theory which suggest that extreme levels of behavior (in this case, controlling others) are often the result of discrepancies between perceptions of identity relevant meanings and the identity standard. Second, we examine factors which influence perceptions relevant to the control identity standard. We look to other control processes within the individual that may influence this process. Finally, we address the consequences that these control identity relevant perceptions have for interaction. While we know that behavior is a function of the discrepancy between perceptions and the control identity standard, we examine the results of a particular control identity for relationships.

#### *Perceptions of Discrepant Identity Meanings*

According to identity theory (Burke 1991), when a person's self-perceptions on some dimension of meaning are consistent with the meaning held by the identity standard, the person will continue to act in the same manner that is producing those perceptions of the self. If, on the other hand, a person has self-perceptions that are "lower" on some dimension of meaning than



the standard, that person will, assuming s/he has learned how, act in ways that are "higher" on the dimension of meaning to counteract the lower perceptions (the negative feedback of a control system). Over time, this results in new perceptions that are "higher" on the dimension and thus more in accord with the standard. The terms "higher" and "lower" here are simply comparative and arbitrary. For example, if *strength* is the relevant dimension of meaning then "lower" refers to the weaker end and "higher" refers to the stronger end. Or, if *femininity* is the relevant dimension then "lower" refers to less the feminine end and "higher" refers to the more feminine end.

When persons' identities are in equilibrium, those persons with "higher" standards will behave in ways that are consistent with this "higher" meaning, and those with "lower" standards will behave in ways consistent with this "lower" meaning. For example, persons with an identity standard that is "strong" will behave in ways that are consistent with the meaning "strong," and those with a standard that is "weak" will behave in ways that are consistent with the meaning "weak."

What happens when persons' identity systems are not in full equilibrium? As Swann and Hill (1982) have shown, persons with an identity standard that is "dominant" when given feedback that they are acting in a "submissive" way (thus affecting their self-perceptions of dominance), will act in a fashion even more dominant than "dominant" persons who are given consistent ("dominant") feedback. Thus, those who act in the most dominant way are those whose identity standard has the meaning "dominant" but who have some self-perceptions that they are not so dominant. A similar phenomenon holds at the other end. Persons who act the most submissive are those with a submissive standard who are given feedback (have self-perceptions) that they are somewhat dominant. In order to restore congruency between the self-perception and the

identity standard, these persons act even *more* submissively than their usual degree of submissiveness.

Using the data from study one (described below), we examine persons who see themselves as very controlling in comparison to those who see themselves as controlling others very little, if at all. We assume that identity processes are not necessarily in a perfect equilibrium and that people are continually working to bring their self-perceptions into line with their identity standards. From the discussion above, we expect that those persons who are *very* controlling of others have some degree of incongruity in their perceptions of self-relevant meanings such that although they see themselves generally in terms of meanings consistent with controlling others, they also see themselves partially in terms of meanings inconsistent with this self-view. Thus, not all of their self-perceptions meet their identity standard, with the consequence (so our logic goes) they begin to act with higher than "normal" control of others.

Similarly, people at the other end who have little or no control over others, also have some degree of incongruity in their perceptions of self-relevant meanings such that although they see themselves generally in terms of meanings consistent with *not* controlling others, they do see themselves partially in terms of meanings discrepant with this self-view and hence they begin to act with lower than "normal" control of others in order to remove this inconsistency.

Our first hypothesis tests this expectation from identity theory:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Persons who are either very high or very low in acting to control others will have self-perceptions containing components that are inconsistent with their general self-meanings regarding controlling others.*

#### *Factors Influencing the Control Identity*

We view the control identity as rooted in other control processes that have been extensively investigated in the literature. The control processes we examine include self-monitoring,

mastery or self-efficacy, and efficacy-based self-esteem. In general, while these control processes predict the level of one's control identity, it is also true that the control identity will be a mechanism by which individuals maintain their particular levels of self-monitoring, mastery, and self-esteem. Each of these control processes are discussed below.

*Self-monitoring* is observing and controlling one's own behavior so that it is consistent with the standards of appropriateness for a situation as held by others in the situation rather than oneself (Snyder 1974). Persons who are high in self-monitoring are keenly aware of others' expectations, and they use these expectations as well as others' reactions to their performance as a guide for self-presentation. Persons who are low in self-monitoring pay less attention to the reactions of others to their own behavior and are guided more by their own internal standards.

Research predicts that those high in self-monitoring will be more likely to use secondary control while those low in self-monitoring will be more likely to use primary control (Hoyle and Sowards 1993). While secondary control entails accommodating to the world, attempting to fit in with the world, or bringing the self into line with the environment, primary control is attempting to change the environment to fit one's needs or bringing the environment into line with the self (Rothbaum et al. 1982). Since those low in self-monitoring would be more likely to use primary control, it is hypothesized that low self-monitors will be more likely to control others so as to get what they want. Therefore, they would be more likely to have a highly dominant control identity. Thus, we hypothesize that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Self-monitoring will be negatively associated with one's control identity.*

*Mastery* is "the extent to which people see themselves as being in control of the forces that importantly affect their lives" (Pearlin et al. 1981: 340). It is the feeling of self-efficacy or competence in dealing with the world (Gecas 1989). Like the self-esteem motive (Gecas 1982; Kaplan 1975; Rosenberg 1979; Wells and Marwell 1976), researchers have indicated a self-

efficacy motive (Bandura 1977; 1986; Gecas 1982; White 1959). Having mastery over the world motivates behavior.

One of the ways of achieving mastery is by taking control of the forces that affect one's life. This may involve controlling oneself either cognitively, emotionally, or behaviorally. Mastery may also involve controlling another. By manipulating others, one may get what s/he wants. Thus, controlling others is one way to get control over the environment. Therefore, we expect that:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Mastery will be positively associated with the control identity.*

*Self-esteem* is the evaluation of the self in negative or positive terms (Rosenberg 1979). While self-esteem is based on feelings of self-worth and stems from the opinions of others, it also has as its source feelings of self-efficacy which originate from effective performance (Franks and Marolla 1976; Gecas and Schwalbe 1983). While the two sources of self-esteem overlap, what is of particular interest to us is self-esteem that is rooted in efficacious action. If self-esteem is positively associated with feelings of competence, then this competence should include controlling oneself so as to get what one wants. However, competence may also involve controlling others. This, in turn, should influence a highly dominant control identity.

Consequently, we anticipate that:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Self-esteem will be positively related to the control identity.*

#### *Consequences of the Control Identity for Relationships*

We examine three characteristics of relationships: "trust," "perspective taking," and "conflict." These characteristics are important because they have to do with security, dependability, understanding, and harmony which necessarily influence the growth and stability of relationships. Previous research indicates that perspective taking and conflict are related to controlling another in relationships (Stets 1993). We add to this the aspect of trust.

*Trust* reflects "confident expectations of positive outcomes from an intimate partner" (Holmes and Rempel 1989: 188). A highly dominant control identity is the antithesis of high trust (Holmes and Rempel 1989). Those whose control identity is high in dominance are less likely to accept another's control. However, such acceptance forms the basis of trust since by trusting others, one puts their fate in another's hands. Those with a highly dominant control identity may exert control over others to reduce the uncertainty of how the other will behave. This will lead to low trust since one lacks confidence that the other will behave in accordance with one's expectations, thereby confirming the idea that the other should be controlled (Zand 1972).

*Perspective taking* is derived from Mead's (1934) notion of taking the role of the other when acting.<sup>5</sup> It is imaginatively adopting another's view and devising a performance on the basis of that imagination (Bernstein and Davis 1982; Davis 1983; Davis and Oathout 1987; Franzoi et al. 1985; Long and Andrews 1990). It is a cognitive activity as opposed to the emotional activity associated with empathy (Coutu 1951; Stryker 1957; Stryker and Statham 1985). Perspective taking facilitates the development of smooth relationships (Davis 1983) and may help avoid conflictual situations since it encourages accommodation rather than opposition (Franzoi et al. 1985). Persons whose control identity is very dominant have little willingness to know or adjust to the other's view. Instead, having a highly dominant control identity should lead to imposing one's own (rather than adopting another's) viewpoint. This is consistent with earlier research which has shown that reduced perspective taking is related to increased control over others (Stets 1993).

*Conflict* is "an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another" (Peterson 1983: 365). Conflict may be viewed as a struggle for control where one person wants his/her goals fulfilled, and these goals are at odds with another's.

What may result is resistance by the other and thus conflict since the goals of both individuals cannot be fulfilled simultaneously. Therefore, having a very dominant control identity should lead to frequent conflict. This is congruous with previous work which has shown that conflict is associated with increased control over others (Stets 1993).

The consequences of the control identity for relationships are thus summarized in the following three hypotheses:

*H<sub>5</sub>: One's control identity will negatively influence trust.*

*H<sub>6</sub>: One's control identity will negatively influence perspective taking.*

*H<sub>7</sub>: One's control identity will positively influence conflict.*

#### Method

The hypothesized causes and consequences of the control identity are tested on two samples. Sample one is a sample of dating individuals in which we have data on one of the individuals only. Sample two is a sample of newly married couples in which there is data for both partners. The data in both samples are cross-sectional. Therefore, we cannot directly test whether the results serve to maintain one's control identity standard over time. However, we can test the hypotheses outlined above, and thus determine whether some of the implications of the control-process model are consistent with the findings arrived at from this research. Thus, we are less concerned with explaining variation in the outcome variables, and we are more concerned with whether the results confirm our predictions that follow from identity theory.

#### *Sample One*

A sample of college students was obtained from 12 undergraduate classes at a large western university in 1992. A survey was administered to these students, asking them to respond to questions about themselves and the person they currently dated. If they were not currently dating, they were to think about the person they most recently dated during the past 12 months.<sup>6</sup>

Of the 808 students enrolled in these classes, 625 attended class on the day the survey was administered (a 77% attendance rate), and 607 responded to the survey (or 97% of the students in attendance).<sup>7</sup> Of these respondents, we eliminated those who were married, widowed, divorced, and those who were neither currently dating nor had dated in the past 12 months. This left 484 respondents.

The 484 students used in this analysis have a demographic profile that does not significantly depart from the average student at the university sampled. For example, 42% of the respondents were male and 58% were females. The average age of respondents was 20. Approximately 90% of the respondents were white. Most respondents were from the lower and middle class, reflecting the student body as a whole.

### *Sample Two*

These data come from the first wave of a three year panel study of newly married couples.<sup>8</sup> The sample was drawn from a pool of 1,295 randomly selected marriage license applications from January 1, 1991 to November 30, 1992 in two middle size metropolitan communities in the state of Washington. Of the 1,295 couples, 574 met the criteria for project involvement. It was the first marriage for both individuals and no children were living in the home. Of the 574 couples, 338 couples (59%) agreed to participate in the study. Of the 338 couples, 25 couples later withdrew from the study due to personal reasons or administrative reasons (for example, it was difficult to contact and secure their project participation). This left 313 couples. Information on the 313 couples was initially collected anywhere from two weeks to three months into their marriage in 1992. A 90-minute, face-to-face interview was conducted on the husbands and wives, separately. These interviews serve as the data for the present analysis.

### *Measures*

*Self-Perceptions Relevant to the Control Identity.* To measure control identity perceptions, the PAQ (Personal Attributes Questionnaire, Spence and Helmreich 1978) was used as a source of items to capture the self-meanings relevant to the control identity standard. While these items are often used to measure masculinity and femininity, Spence and Helmreich point out that they are better conceptualized as indicators of agency or instrumentality on the one hand (in which we were particularly interested), and expressiveness and communion on the other. While these items may not reflect all of the possible meanings associated with control, they do provide a fairly comprehensive set of meanings upon which to draw. This measure is available in both samples.

*Controlling One's Partner.* To identify who was high or low on perceived control over one's partner, we used a 10-item control scale (Stets 1993). Each item represents a type of controlling behavior, for example, "I make my partner do what I want," or "I regulate who my partner sees," and respondents were asked to indicate how often ("never," "seldom," "sometimes," "fairly often," or "very often" (coded 1-5)) each behavior was used toward their partner in the past 12 months. The items formed a single factor with an omega reliability (Heise and Bohrnstedt 1970) of .87. The items were summed with a high score indicating high control over others. This measure is available in both samples.

An important consideration is the conceptual independence of these two measures: the control identity measure and the controlling one's partner measure. The conceptual independence can be seen in the content of the items, which refer, on the one hand, to self-descriptions of character (dominant vs. submissive, never gives up vs. gives up easily), and, on the other hand, to descriptions of behavior toward one's partner (I make my partner do what I want; I regulate who my partner sees). The independence can also be seen in the pattern of responses to the items. A factor analysis of the combined items making up the two scales



yielded two factors with the items of the control over one's partner measure having the highest loading on one factor (.45 to .69), and the items of the control identity measure having their highest loading on the other factor (.35 to .66).

An 18-item, revised version of the *self-monitoring* scale was used in this research (Snyder and Gangestad 1986). Respondents were asked whether the items were either "true" or "false" (coded 1-2) as they applied to themselves. For example, "I find it hard to imitate the behavior of others," or "I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them." The items formed a single factor with an omega reliability of .81. The items were summed with a high score measuring high self-monitoring. This measure is available only in sample one.

*Mastery* or *self-efficacy* was measured using a seven-item scale (Pearlin et al. 1981). Respondents were asked whether they "strongly disagreed," "disagreed," "agreed," or "strongly agreed" (coded 1-4) that each of the items reflecting a certain degree of mastery over the environment applied to themselves. For instance, "I can do just about anything I really set my mind to," or "What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me." The items formed a single factor with an omega reliability of .81. The items were summed with a high score measuring high self-efficacy. This measure is available in both samples.

*Trust in the partner* was examined through an eight-item scale that was composed of items such as "There are times when my partner cannot be trusted," or "I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me" (Larzelere and Huston 1980). Respondents reported whether they "strongly disagreed," "disagreed," "neither agreed or disagreed," "agreed," or "strongly agreed" (coded 1-5) that each of the statements reflected their feelings about their partner during the past 12 months. The items formed a single factor with an omega reliability of .92. The items were summed with a high score representing high trust in their partner. This measure is available in both samples.

A four-item scale measured *perspective taking* (Stets 1993). Respondents reported whether the statements "never," "seldom," "sometimes," "fairly often," or "very often" (coded 1-5) described their relationship with their partner in the past 12 months. Example items include: "I have difficulty seeing my partner's viewpoint in an argument," and "I see myself in the same way that my partner sees me." The items formed a single dimension with an omega reliability of .73. The items were summed with a higher score representing greater perspective taking. This measure is available in both samples.

The *conflict scale* (Stets 1993) is made up of 10 items on which respondents were asked to report "how often in the past year they or their partner had open disagreements in the areas of spending habits, their social life, their job, spending time alone, communication, sex, planning a future, commitment, religion, and alcohol and drug use. Response categories were "never," "seldom," "sometimes," "fairly often," or "very often" (coded 1-5). The items formed a single scale with an omega reliability of .87. The items were summed with a higher score representing greater conflict in the relationship. This measure is available in sample one. In sample two, a very similar conflict scale was used, though the two items "planning a future" and "commitment" were not included.

Table 1 presents the correlations and variances of all of the measures in both samples. The results show that while the various control measures are related, they are nevertheless distinct and reflect different dimensions. The results also show a great deal of similarity between the two samples.

(Table 1 about here)

## Results

To test the first hypothesis about inconsistent self-perceptions among persons who are either very high or very low in controlling others, the data in sample one was divided into quartiles on

the control over partner scale. Respondents who had scores in the first and fourth quartiles were identified as frequent and infrequent controllers, respectively. Those who had scores in the second and third quartiles were labeled average controllers. Discriminant function analysis was then used to examine the self-views of the high versus low controllers on the PAQ items.

Results of the discriminant function analysis showed that the self-views of the very high controllers differed significantly from those of the very low controllers on five of the PAQ items. These items (and their discriminant function coefficients) are: 1) very dominant...very submissive ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), 2) very competitive...not at all competitive ( $\beta=.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ), 3) very cold in relations with others...very warm in relations with others ( $\beta=.25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), 4) indifferent to others' approval...highly needful of others' approval ( $\beta=-.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and 5) never gives up easily...gives up easily ( $\beta=-.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Frequent controllers were more likely to have self-views of dominance, competitiveness, coldness, being needful of others' approval, and giving up easily. Infrequent controllers were more likely to have self-views of submissiveness, noncompetitiveness, warmth, indifferent to others' approval, and being tenacious.

Clearly, the self-views of the high and low controllers contain a mixed set of meanings. In accord with hypothesis one, some of the self-views are consistent with controlling others, but others are not. The consistent self-views are dominant, competitive, and cold among the high controllers. We will call this set *self-views of dominance*. The inconsistent self-views among the high controllers include seeing themselves as highly needful of others' approval and as giving up easily. We call this set *self-views of self-confidence* and note that the very high controllers lack this self-view of having confidence. Thus, there appears to be two separate and inconsistent aspects to the self-views of those who have very high or very low control over others. If we consider a scale made from all five of these self-views relevant to the control identity, we see that the three views which make up the dominance component account for about 88% of the total

scale variance, while those two views which make up the self-confidence component account for about 12% of the variance. Additionally, across the entire sample, the dominance component is positively correlated with the self-confidence component ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ). Clearly the self-perceptions of most of the people are consistent with their identity standard. As hypothesized, it is primarily among those who are in the upper and lower quartiles that these inconsistencies show up.<sup>9</sup>

Because the control identity was defined by the levels of control evidenced by the respondents in sample one, it is not sufficient to test the model in that sample. For this reason, we now turn to sample two to test the model. Can we replicate the finding that persons with a control identity composed of high dominance and low self-confidence are the persons who control their partner the most while persons with the combination of low dominance and high self-confidence are the persons who control their partner the least? To test this hypothesis we used the weights and items from sample one to define dominance, self-confidence and the control identity (combined dominance and self-confidence) in sample two. We next divided the respondents of sample two into three groups (see Figure 2) depending upon whether their dominance exceeded their level of self-confidence (group 1), their dominance and self-confidence levels were relatively equal (group 2), or their dominance levels were lower than their self-confidence (group 3). Our hypothesis from study one is that persons in group 1 will control their partner the most, while those in group 3 will control their partner the least when level of dominance is controlled. An analysis of covariance predicting control of partner was run with group as the predictor and level of dominance as the covariate.

(Table 2 about here)

The results, as shown in Table 2, provide excellent confirmatory evidence of our initial hypothesis. While persons with high degrees of dominance do control their spouse more than

those without that dominance, the persons who control their spouse the most are those who have very dominant control identities yet see themselves as lacking in self-confidence. Conversely, those who control their spouse the least are those with rather submissive control identities, but who see themselves with an excessive degree of self-confidence.

We turn now to examine the factors hypothesized to influence perceptions relevant to the control identity standard. In this and the remaining analyses, we shall examine the dominance and self-confidence aspects of the self-perceptions both separately as well as combined into an overall measure of their control identity combining both the dominance and self-confidence aspects. Table 3 shows the results testing hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 by regressing the dominance and self-confidence self-views on the various control processes. As hypothesized, we find that being low on self-monitoring (in sample one where this is measured) is likely to lead one to have self-views of dominance, competitiveness and of being cold in relation to others. Additionally, those who are guided by their own internal standards, and who have a tendency to use primary control, are more likely to have a highly dominant control identity, perhaps as a way to get control over the environment.

(Table 3 about here)

Table 3 also shows that those with high mastery and high self-esteem are more likely to view themselves as never giving up easily and as not needing others' approval (the views that make up the self-confidence component). This finding, which is true in both samples, may result from the fact that these items contain efficacy ("never giving up easily") and esteem ("not needing others' approval) components. Overall, the findings show that different factors predict each of two components of the self-views. Thus, it would appear that those who are highest in controlling others have self-views that are dominant, competitive and cold as a result of being low on self-monitoring, but also view themselves as giving up easily and needing others' approval as a result

of low mastery and esteem. In an attempt to bring their self-views into consistency, they engage in an excessive degree of controlling others.

Table 4 shows some of the consequences for relationships of having a dominant control identity for both samples. It tests and generally supports hypotheses 5, 6 and 7.<sup>10</sup> The hypothesized causal ordering of the relationship characteristics (trust, perspective taking, and conflict) is based on the assumption that trust forms the basis of greater perspective taking and reduced conflict in relationships, and that greater perspective taking also acts to reduce conflict in relationships (Stets 1993). The cross-sectional results in each of the samples do not disconfirm our assumed causal ordering. As shown in Table 4, increased trust leads to increased perspective taking, and both increased trust and increased perspective taking reduce conflict in relationships.

(Table 4 about here)

The effects of the various self-views on relationships are revealing. Looking first at sample one, as hypothesized, those whose self-views are dominant are less likely to trust their partners and less likely to take the perspective of their partners when acting. They are not, however, more likely to experience conflict in their relationships directly as a result of their high levels of dominance in their control identity in sample one. However, this is found in sample two. Indirectly, they will also experience more conflict because of their reduced trust and perspective taking. Considering only the self-confidence component, there are few effects. Only in sample one is there a weak effect such that those who view themselves as having high confidence are *less* likely to experience conflict, though they have no greater or lesser degrees of trust or perspective taking compared with those lacking in self-confidence. When we look at the combined self-views (which are primarily made up of the dominance component), those with

self-views consistent with meanings of controlling others show the negative direct effects of decreasing trust and perspective taking in both samples and increasing conflict in sample two.<sup>11</sup>

Overall, we find that among the married couples, a person with a very dominant control identity is less able to take the perspective of their spouse, is less likely to trust their spouse, and (in sample two) is more likely to have conflict with their spouse. It is clear, therefore, that our initial findings are not confined to student populations or to dating couples, but apply more generally to married couples as well.

Because the data in study one were collected on individuals, we were not able to examine the relationship between partners. The data in study two are collected from both husbands and wives of newly married couples. This allows us to examine how the control identity of each partner affects not only their own behavior, but that of their partner as well. In this analysis, we basically follow the same model that we have been using, but here we have separate models for the husband and wife, and allow variables of the husband to influence the wife and vice versa following the general form of the recursive model. We have not allowed husband and wife variables at the same level to influence each other, and have instead allowed their error terms to correlate. Thus, for example, husband's control does not influence wife's control, or vice versa, but the error terms for each are allowed to correlated. This model is outlined in Figure 3.

(Figure 3 about here)

The results of this analysis are shown in Table 5. These again, in large part, replicate the within person effects that were found before, though there are some differences between husbands and wives.<sup>12</sup> One's control identity is a function of mastery (though the effects of self-esteem that were found before do not show up here). Those persons who have higher levels of mastery have higher levels of dominance in their control identities. One's control identity also has consequences for perspective taking as well as the degree to which one control one's partner.

The greater a person's dominance level of their control identity, the less they are able to take the perspective of their partner, and the greater the degree of control they exercise over their partner. The previous finding of an effect of control identity on trust is absent in this analysis which includes cross-spouse effects, and the effect of dominance in the control identity on conflict appears confined to males.

(Table 5 about here)

Interestingly, there are some, though not many, cross-person effects. Trust by one spouse decreases conflict and increases the perspective taking of their partner whether we are considering husbands or wives. The greater the dominance of the control identity of the wife, the less is the degree to which the husband controls her. On the other hand, if the husband has low levels of mastery he is likely to be controlled by his wife. A higher level of mastery in the wife increases trust in the husband but also the conflict he perceives, and reduces the degree of dominance in his control identity. But, a higher level of mastery in the husband leads to greater levels of dominance in the control identity of the wife. Finally, the higher the level of dominance in the control identity of the wife the lower will be the trust of this husband, while a higher level of dominance in the control identity of the husband the higher is the conflict in the relationship.

One final result is not contained in the table; this is the degree of correlation among the errors of corresponding husband and wife variables (see Figure 3). The results show significant positive correlations between the error terms for husband and wife levels of trust, of perspective-taking, and of conflict. These results suggest that there are reasons outside the model shown in Figure 3 that keep similar levels of trust, perspective-taking, and conflict between husbands and wives. On the other hand, the error terms for husband and wives levels of dominance in their control identities or their levels of control over each other are uncorrelated. Indeed, not only are the error terms uncorrelated, the variables themselves are uncorrelated between husbands and



wives. The amount of control one spouse has over the other is unrelated to the amount of control the other has.

### Discussion

The control identity of a person is the set of self-meanings associated with controlling others. It is a person identity as opposed to a role identity in that it serves to sustain the individual rather than a group or other social structure. What distinguishes it as an identity from a personality trait is that it acts as a standard for a control system designed to maintain perceptions consistent with the standard. When we compared the self-conceptions of persons who perceive that they very frequently control their partner with those who engage in little or no control over their partner, we found, as hypothesized, that both the very frequent controllers and the very infrequent controllers had inconsistent self-views. On the one hand, most of their combined self-views (85-88%) varied along a dimension that we labeled as dominance: they saw themselves varying degrees as dominant, competitive and cold toward others. On the other hand, part of their self-views (12-15%) contained a dimension we labeled as self-confidence: they saw themselves in varying degrees as being needful of other's approval and giving up easily.<sup>13</sup> The inconsistency occurred because the very high controllers combined dominance with a lack of self-confidence, while the very low controllers combined submissiveness with strong self-confidence. Most of the sample, however, combined dominance and self-confidence in relatively equal degrees.

These results are exactly what we hypothesized on the basis of identity theory. Recall that individuals work at maintaining consistency between their perceptions of themselves (reflected appraisals) and their identity standards. When there is a discrepancy between the two, the comparator emits an error signal producing behavior designed to align the reflected appraisals with the identity standard.

Given the control identity standard, people will behave in ways that are consistent with, verify, and reinforce this standard. People who see themselves as dominant and controlling will behave by controlling others, and this behavior will serve as the basis for perceptions of controlling others. When they also see themselves in terms which do not match the control identity standard (for example, as lacking self-confidence), the comparator will emit an error signal causing them to engage even more in behaviors that result in their being seen as more controlling and thus reducing the discrepancy between self-perceptions and their identity standard. Thus, we saw the inconsistent self-views that were hypothesized among those who are very high on control in sample one. Similarly, people who see themselves as submissive and not controlling will behave by controlling others very little. When they also see themselves in terms which do not match their identity standard (for example, being very high on the self-confidence dimension), their comparator will emit an error signal causing them to engage in even fewer acts of control in an attempt to bring their self-perceptions back in line with their identity standard.

In study one, we examined the self-views of people who control their partner a lot as compared with the self-views of those who control their partner very little. In study two, however, we turned this around and examined the control behavior of those who had consistent and inconsistent self-views and in this predictive study also found that those persons with inconsistent control identities acted to compensate for this inconsistency. Those persons with highly dominant control identities who also felt some lack of self-confidence acted even more controlling than their level of dominance would predict, while those persons with more submissive control identities but who had some highly self-confident feelings about themselves acted to reduce even further their level of control over their partner.

How do we know that dominance reflects the control identity standard and (the lack of) self-confidence represents inconsistencies with the standard; after all, they are both measured in the

same way? First we have theory. Identity theory tell us people basically act in accord with their identities (Burke 1980). We were examining people who were very high in control over others and contrasting them with people who were very low in control over others. The self-views of both groups in general should be consistent with the identity standard. This corresponds to the dominance views. Second, the dominance views make up the vast part of the variance in self-views that were measured (85-88 %) and identity theory suggests that most people maintain consistency when they are able (Swann and Hill 1982). Third, identity theory tells us that when reflected appraisals are different than the identity standard, the person will usually engage in more behavior reflective of the identity standard in an attempt to change the reflected appraisals. If we were to reverse our view of which is the standard and which is reflected appraisals, we would have to believe that people are behaving inconsistently with their identity standard, that people are engaging in behavior to change their identity standard to be in accord with their reflected appraisals and that the identity standard accounts for only 12-15% of the variability in the measured self-views. This is difficult to do.

Now how do we know that the dominance and self-confidence views are part of a single identity rather than separate identities? First, conceptually, the items making up the dominance and self-confidence components are part of the same meaning set, thus demonstrating face validity. For example, those who never give up easily are also those who are more likely to be dominant and competitive. Second, empirically, the data show that for most respondents, the two components go together. It is only those who have very high or very low control over others who show a negative relationship between dominance and self-confidence. Parsimony suggests that if one identity can sufficiently explain the self-views of respondents, there is no need to introduce the idea of two identities. We think one identity provides an adequate explanation.

The results of this research give us a better picture of those who are at the extremes in their control of others. Their views of themselves are not simply that of dominant, strong (or submissive, weak) persons. There is also weakness among some who are strong and strength among some who are weak. This very inconsistency serves as an added impetus for such people to behave in more extreme fashions in order to change their reflected appraisals. Part of the source of the weakness among the dominant lies in low mastery and low self-esteem. Indeed, controlling others may serve to make them feel more efficacious and better about themselves, although this would need longitudinal data to be tested. Similarly, part of the source of strength among the submissive lies in high mastery and self-esteem. For them, controlling others even less may serve to make them less efficacious and feel less well about themselves.

However, while the very high controllers are trying to achieve consistency between their identities and all of their reflected appraisals, their self-perceptions and resulting behaviors are having adverse effects on their relationships. As a result of a highly dominant control identity, trust in one's partner is diminished as is the degree to which perspective taking occurs. Reduced trust and perspective taking all lead to increased conflict and control in the relationship. We thus have the startling result that a personal identity, which is supposed to act to sustain the individual, may result in actions which work against sustaining a relationship. By taking actions to reduce discrepancies between their control identity (which normally acts to keep the individual in relative control of their situation) and their reflected appraisals, they bring about less trust and perspective taking and more conflict and control in the relationship; a true "self-society" conflict.

We must keep in mind that the maintenance of a high level of dominance in the control identity through control over others is influenced by societal norms. In American society, one of the ways we express control over our environment is by pushing ourselves onto others,

manipulating others, forcing our goals onto them, and getting them to do what we want. This is a very independent, egocentric, Western approach. People in many non-Western cultures accomplish control over the environment not by forcing others to accommodate to them, but by accommodating to their surroundings (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Instead of using the dominant approach of primary control, they use the more passive and submissive approach of secondary control. Therefore, how individuals go about aligning perceptions with the control identity standard is culturally determined. While some choose actions that emphasize independence and autonomy, others choose actions that express interdependence and connectedness with others.

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Table 1. Correlations Among Variables with Standard Deviations on the Diagonal. Data from Study 1 (N=469) Below The Diagonal, Data from Study 2 (N=619) Above the Diagonal

	Self-Monitor	Mastery	Self-Esteem	Trust	Persp.-Taking	Conflict	Control Partner	Dominance	Self-Conf.	Control Identity
Self-Monitor	3.4\na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Mastery	-0.07	3.2\4.5	0.47**	0.28**	0.33**	-0.14**	-0.16**	0.09*	0.24**	0.18**
Self-Esteem	0.14**	0.63**	4.9\4.6	0.16**	0.27**	-0.15**	-0.11**	0.06	0.29**	0.19**
Trust	0.02	0.21**	0.28**	6.3\6.4	0.50**	-0.33**	-0.25**	-0.10*	0.05	-0.05
Persp.-Taking	0.00	0.20**	0.24**	0.62**	2.5\2.7	-0.32**	-0.25**	-0.19**	0.05	-0.12**
Conflict	-0.01	-0.20**	-0.22**	-0.44**	-0.47**	6.8\6.3	0.20**	0.15**	-0.00	0.11**
Control Partner	-0.04	-0.15**	-0.12*	-0.21**	-0.22**	0.38**	5.3\5.7	0.18**	-0.05	0.21**
Dominance	-0.11*	0.06	0.09*	-0.10*	-0.13**	0.08	0.30**	.20\2.0	0.30**	0.89**
Self-Conf.	-0.11*	0.34**	0.36**	0.10*	0.09*	-0.14**	-0.06	0.30**	.12\1.3	0.32**
Control Identity	-0.14**	0.22**	0.25**	-0.02	-0.06	-0.01	0.33**	0.82**	0.30**	.27\2.7

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$   
na = Not Available in Study 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Covariance of Control Over Partner by Dominance/Self-Confidence Groups and Level of Dominance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Total	20175.41	617	32.70		
Between Groups	544.96	2	272.48	8.64	0.001
Dominance	196.52	1	196.52	6.23	0.01
Error	19369.92	614	31.54		

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Mean Levels of Control Over Partner (Adjusted for Level of Dominance)

Group	Mean
Group 1	12.17
Group 2	10.28
Group 3	8.39

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All groups are significantly different from each other in level of Control ( $p < .001$ )

Table 3. Standardized Regression Estimates of Factors Predicting Dominance, Self-Confidence, and the Control Identity

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables					
	Sample One (N=469)			Sample Two (N= 619)		
	Dominance	Self-Confidence	Control Identity	Dominance	Self-Confidence	Control Identity
Self-Monitoring	-0.10**	0	-0.11**	na	na	na
Mastery	0	0.21**	0.10*	0	0.14**	0.12**
Self-Esteem	0	0.23**	0.17**	0	0.23**	0.13**

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

0 = Estimated effect not significant.

na = Measure not available in sample two.

Table 4. Standardized Regression Estimates of Effects of Dominance, Self-Confidence, the Control Identity and Other Factors

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables					
	Sample One (N=469)			Sample Two (N=619)		
	Conflict	Perspective Taking	Trust	Conflict	Perspective Taking	Trust
Perspective Taking	-0.31**	-	-	-0.16**	-	-
Trust	-0.23**	0.59**	-	-0.22**	0.42**	-
Dominance	0	-0.09**	-0.14**	0.11**	-0.17**	-0.13**
Self-Confidence	-0.08*	0	0	0	0	0
Control Identity	0	-0.07**	-0.10**	0.10**	-0.16**	-0.11**
Self-Monitoring	0	0	0	0	na	na
Mastery	0	0	0	0	0.16**	0.27**
Self-Esteem	0	0	0.26**	-0.09*	0.14**	0

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

0 = Estimated effect not significant.

na = Measure not available in sample two.

Table 5. Standardized Effects Estimated from Model in Figure 3

Independent Variables	Outcome Variables									
	Outcomes for Wife					Outcomes for Husband				
	Control Husband	Conflict	Perspective-Taking	Trust	Control Identity	Control Wife	Conflict	Perspective-Taking	Trust	Control Identity
<b>Wife Vars.</b>										
Conflict	0.13**	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
Persp.-Taking	-0.10**	-0.27**	-	-	-	0	-0.11**	-	-	-
Trust	-0.12**	-0.19**	0.37**	-	-	0	-0.20**	0.12**	-	-
Control Identity	0.23**	0	-0.13**	0	-	-0.11*	0	0	-0.14**	-
Mastery	-0.23**	0.45**	0.29**	0.21**	0.21**	0	0.30**	0	0.19**	-0.11*
Self-Esteem	0	-0.23**	0.09*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Hus. Vars.</b>										
Conflict	0	-	-	-	-	0.14**	-	-	-	-
Persp.-Taking	0	0	-	-	-	-0.11**	-0.15**	-	-	-
Trust	0	-0.18**	0.11*	-	-	-0.11**	-0.20**	0.45**	-	-
Control Identity	0	0.11**	0	0	-	0.20**	0.18**	-0.11**	0	-
Mastery	-0.11*	0	0	0	0.14**	0	0	0	0.23**	0.24**
Self-Esteem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.27**	0	0

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01

0 = effect not significant.

Cross-person effects are in shaded portions of the table.

## Endnotes

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1. While the behavior may be more or less random at the beginning, after a person learns what behaviors bring about changes on the environment, they may efficiently choose behaviors that produce the desired result quickly. When this happens, those behaviors acquire meanings by the results they produce, and in the future, they may be selected.
  2. Burke and Serpe (1993) show that while the dimensions on which people perceive themselves are very stable over extended periods of time (three months in their study), actual self-perceptions change over that time, but always there is tension to move them toward the equilibrium point.
  3. If a person's set of self-meanings (identity standard) is different from their reflected appraisals, they may respond in a number of different ways. They may distort the reflected appraisals, attempt to convince others of their self-view, or selectively associate with others who do adopt their self-view (Swann 1990). Alternatively, if they cannot obtain self-verifying inputs, they may ultimately adopt the view of others, thereby changing their identity standard.
  4. We also want to make it clear that we do not imply that such self-controlled processes are necessarily conscious. Persons may not be aware of what they are doing.
  5. The concept of role-taking has developed in a different fashion following Turner's (1962) discussion. Turner emphasized the positions one holds in the social structure and the roles that are played out in interaction as a result of these positions.
  6. "Dating" meant going out with someone during the past 12 months for at least two months, and having at least six dates with that person. Of those who have dated for two months, most of them



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have been dating their partner anywhere from once a week to everyday. Therefore, in only a minority of cases does an individual who dates for two months have two or three dates. However, to insure the exclusion of individuals who dated very infrequently, the number of dates was restricted to at least six.

7. Since the survey was completed on a voluntary basis, some students refused to participate.
8. These data are part of a larger longitudinal study of first married couples, "Socialization Into Marital Roles," funded by a grant from NIMH (MH46828). The research is under the direction of Irving Tallman, Peter J. Burke, and Viktor Gecas.
9. Although the scale was defined in terms of the level of control over their partner reported by the respondent, we can test the effects of inconsistency on controlling others. For this, sample one was divided into three parts (see Figure 2) depending upon whether their dominance exceeded their level of self-confidence (group 1), their dominance and self-confidence levels were relatively equal (group 2), or their dominance levels were lower than their self-confidence levels (group 3). An analysis of covariance predicting control of the partner was run with group as the predictor and level of dominance as the covariate. The results confirmed that the highest levels of control were in group one and the lowest were in group 3.
10. We examined whether the results might be due to gender differences in control. Since men are stereotypically more dominant and women are stereotypically more insecure, gender, rather than the control identity, might be explaining the findings. We found that while men scored higher than women on the competitive self-views ( $F=39.00$ ,  $p < .01$  in sample one, and  $F=116.83$ ,  $p < .01$  in sample two), and women scored lower than men on the self-confidence self-views ( $F=42.40$ ,  $p$

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< .01 in sample one, and  $F=66.20$ ,  $p<.01$  in sample two), these sex differences did not affect the results in Tables 3 or 4 when sex was controlled.

11. In sample one, it is possible that the self-confidence component depends on whether the individual is still in the dating relationship. If a relationship has ended, perhaps because one person was perceived to be too controlling, the ending of the relationship might reduce self-confidence. In this way, the status of the relationship rather than the actual self-views might be what is producing the results. We examined this. While self-confidence does lead to less perceived control over others, those who ended their relationship were no less self-confidence than those who were still dating ( $F=.57$ , n.s.). Furthermore, those who had ended their relationship were no more likely to have experienced control in their relationship than those whose were still dating.
12. Mastery for wives influences their perspective-taking and the degree to which they control their partner. These effects do not exist for husbands ( $p <.05$  for each difference). In addition, the impact of trust and self-esteem on perspective-taking is greater for husbands than wives ( $p <.05$  for each difference).
13. It might be argued that the two self-views are simply reflective of the instrumental and expressive views of the PAQ which was used to construct these very self-views. However, regression of the two self-views on the PAQ instrumental (M) and expressive (F) scales revealed no significant relationships to these self-views in either sample.