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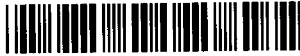
ILLiad TN: 730230 

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of mutual repertory grid ratings of group members in a way that modeled, rather than eliminated, various sources of nonindependence among them, we were able to clarify the extent to which particular dimensions of social appraisal in such groups were most susceptible to the influence of the perceptual sets of group members, their normative stimulus values, and the unique relational nuances of particular dyads. Moreover, our preliminary comparison of these sources of variation to methodologically independent self-ratings and clinical judgments suggests that such perceiver and partner effects might meaningfully relate to client self-concept and social maladjustment, at least within the sample of incest survivors that were the focus of our study.

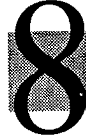
In conclusion, our experience in using the SRM to deepen and clarify the statistically and conceptually challenging study of group process has persuaded us that it has considerable potential for research into group therapy, just as the domain of group therapy may be uniquely amenable to social cognitive analysis. We hope that other investigators will join us in cultivating this terrain and promoting the cross-fertilization of both perspectives.

Notes

1. The rating of liking also includes a constant for the group as well as an error term. The structural model for the rating of liking (X_{ijk}) is then as follows: $X_{ijk} = C + a_i + b_j + ab_{ij} + e_{ijk}$, where C represents the group constant, a_i the actor effect, b_j the partner effect, ab_{ij} the dyadic effect, and e_{ijk} the error term for occasion k.

2. To avoid unnecessary loss of data, missing values for one SAS and one GSI (two different subjects) were replaced by estimates based on the multiple regression for each measure using the posttherapy score as the predictor and the pretherapy score as the criterion.

3. In a study using the SRM based on the SASB, preliminary findings also have shown significant actor and partner effects (Johnson, 1993). Although the measure is both psychometrically and theoretically rigorous, the sample on which the study was based was not a clinical one.



Social Cognition and Self-Concept
A Socially Contextualized Model of Identity

DAPHNA OYSERMAN
MARTIN J. PACKER

"To grow up in Pendleton, New York, is to know oneself distinctly marginal; wherever the fountainheads of significance, . . . they are surely not here, nor are they even within easy driving distance."

—Oates (1995), on Timothy James McVeigh,
chief suspect in the recent bombing
in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

What is social about social cognition? Our answer to this question is twofold: the identity of the cognizer and the process whereby this identity is constructed and maintained. In the above quote, Oates implies that we define ourselves in terms of what is possible given where we are located in time and space. Psychologists have tended to study the social thinker in isolation and to take for granted the nature of this thinker. Even developmental psychologists like Piaget have assumed both an underlying

"epistemic subject" unchanged by the course of development, and that development is an individual cognitive process. In this way, psychologists have neglected the ways in which cognition has a social character and the social origins of the individual thinker. In a word, they have essentialized the individual (Harre & Gillett, 1994). Following Erez and Earley (1993, p. vii), we will argue that although a sense of self is universal, its definition is shaped according to cultural values and perspectives. Although the examples we will use come primarily from the universe of children, youth, and adolescence researchers in an array of applied fields have called for attention to the intersubjective construction of self and behavior (e.g., Amaro, 1995).

In this chapter, we shall describe identity construction as a social and intersubjective process. A sense of self is produced and reproduced in face-to-face, here-and-now interactions, which are themselves embedded in specific social contexts and more general cultural-historical epochs. The ways in which social cognition is at its core an intersubjective phenomenon that cannot be accomplished alone are highlighted when one looks at the social cognizer not in isolation but in social context, especially the social context of the small group. We suggest that this intersubjectivity can be reduced analytically to the activity of individuals only at the cost of misunderstanding and conceptual confusion. Whereas individual thinking is essentially epistemological, the small group accomplishes a social practice that is ontological. It establishes a practically grasped and shared sense of reality. It is this reality that forms the scaffolding of individual cognition.

Small group processes constitute identity; they provide the basis for the kinds of person, the sorts of self, and the forms of agency that are acknowledged. In this manner, possible ways of being in the world are provided by society and its institutions. To say this is not to say that these possibilities are simply taken up and acted out. Rather, identity is established in small social groups—groups such as the family, the peer group, the classroom, and the work group. The possible positions one can adopt are provided by a social process of defining a moral space in which forms of interaction, dialogue, and exchange can take place. We become selves within these contexts, acquiring knowledge about how to be, what counts, and what has

meaning. We organize and make sense of ourselves and attempt to become competent members of society within an unfolding series of face-to-face, here-and-now interactions (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1983).

In this chapter, we focus on the ways in which self-concept is a process of social cognitions, organized and given meaning within contexts. We will use as illustrations primarily our own work with youth in two Michigan communities, in Detroit and in a small industrial town half an hour from Detroit. We will argue that the meaning of even seemingly simple and everyday activities such as "going to school" are context dependent and therefore contain a socially negotiated meaning.

THE SOCIAL FIELD

Our central claim is that the small group provides the proximal context in which possible modes of identity are made available. The social interactions of the small group amount to an ontological process: the process that establishes a practically grasped, shared sense of reality—a social field. This social field provides the basis for the recognition of particular kinds of person and corresponding kinds of agency and knowledge. We suggest that this level of intersubjective phenomena has gone largely unobserved because it has been reduced analytically to the activity of individuals. The cost of this reduction has been misunderstanding and conceptual confusion.

Whereas the activity of the individual is essentially cognitive, the practical activity of the small group is ontological. Identity is established in small social groups, groups such as the family, the peer group, and the school classroom. "Local moral worlds provide sites for the experience of solidarity and community, which are crucial for the construction of identity" (Shaw, 1994, p. 113).

SEMIOTIC MEDIATION

A social field and the interactions that take place within it have a reciprocal relationship. Interactions (typically) sustain and repro-

duce the field, but at the same time, the field constrains and directs the course and character of these interactions. This section will discuss the various semiotic devices whereby fields are reproduced and identities defined.

A variety of semiotic practices sustains a social field and defines the identities within it. Mach (1993) argues that distinctions between "us" and "them" underlie identity (social identity theory makes similar distinctions, e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Contextual cues, in both speech and action, signal identity and afford understanding by positioning the individual in the local community, allowing the other to infer goals and motives on the basis of the social identity that has been indicated. Interchange within a social group typically assigns a label to group members with different identities, attributes membership to the group or a position within the group, and often makes reference to an implicit contrast with other positions or groups. Such contrasts typically carry moral weight. Attention to such interchanges makes it clear that "viewed semantically, the shape and form of identities derive as much from the interpretations ascribed by others to selves as by the meanings persons, as selves, themselves send" (Shaw, 1994, p. 112). Shaw describes the "semiotic mediation" by which identity is constructed, using the semiotic resources of the distinct moral community.

Identity is thus more than a semantic cognitive representation; it is a style, a manner, and a way of being in the world. To maintain the self, it is important to engage in activities and rituals—collective, habitual, and routine activities characterized by predefined, sanctioned ways of behaving. Bodily discipline is an important aspect of this: movement, standing, sitting, singing, and speaking at specified times and in assigned places. These provide the occasion for acquiring what Bourdieu (1980/1990) calls a bodily "hexus." On an individual level, positions are meaning making; at a group level, they are the frameworks that allow individuals from the same social context to be able to predict or make sense of social interactions with one another (e.g., Rogoff, in press). Behavior is understood in terms of the situationally salient positions that can be taken; the importance of

these positions is assumed and one's own and others' behaviors are understood in their terms. Thus, one's own and others' behaviors seem familiar and sensible.

When individuals who have internalized divergent social positions interact, this sense of familiarity may be missing. Individuals may assume goals or orientations as common when they are in fact not held by the other, leading to misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the other. In such circumstances, individuals may understand what the other is doing and what is intended but will be fundamentally unconvinced by the other's behavior or rationale because the premises on which it is built are not shared.

HERE-AND-NOW SITUATIONS, SOCIAL CONTEXTS, AND HISTORICAL-CULTURAL FRAMES

The local social field and the social distinctions of the group relations within it are themselves shaped by the forms of the larger social system. This system sets limits on the local worlds people can construct and the forms of identity these worlds sustain. We propose that any understanding and analysis of the construction of identity must not stop at the social group but be considered at least at three levels: the specific here-and-now situation, the social contexts within which the situation is embedded, and the "times"—the political-historical epoch and cultural milieu.

The self can be understood "through" each of these levels. At each level, both social-cognitive and more hermeneutic understanding can be applied. Thus, self can be understood as constructed of properties or, more hermeneutically, in terms of the background that is playing a constitutive role. The cognitive focuses on the self that *is* within a context; the hermeneutic better captures the dynamic relationships between the person and contextual structures.

The first level is that of the situation: the here and now of the concrete circumstances that a person finds himself or herself in. This level includes attention to the project the person is engaged in,

deliberately chosen or not and reflected on or not. Hermeneutically, understanding of the self at the level of the situation is a matter of recognizing situational constraints and the manner in which one is engaged with these constraints. In cognitive terms, the first level focuses on identifying one's mood, goals, and plans in the situation. For example, if "the first day of school" is the situation, one might understand oneself as being happy and as wanting to fit in or be accepted. Or one might understand that the situation calls for behaving according to a certain protocol and not knowing what the protocol is, being "engaged" in a way that covers anxiety with joking and foolishness. Whereas the social cognitive perspective focuses on the individual, the hermeneutic widens the focus to include the situation.

The next level has to do with the more enduring contexts within which the situation is embedded. For youth, central contexts are likely to be family, school, neighborhood, and peer group. What one is trying to "be" in a given situation, the ways one can be engaged in the situation are likely to be importantly delimited by the contexts within which the situation occurs. These can be termed the *positions* one can take in a context.

The third level, that of the wider historical context, deals with the time in which one lives. Examples of the importance of this level of context come, for example, from the smaller effect of gender on outcomes in more as compared to less recent research on gender effects. Similarly, the particular ways of being a self that are possible for a 6th-grade black girl in a Tuscaloosa, Alabama, school in 1940 differ from those possible for a 6th-grade black girl in a Bronx, New York, school in 1995. Here-and-now, face-to-face situations are embedded in contexts that are embedded in epochs. Whereas a cognitive perspective focuses on the traits, characteristics, goals, and emotions of the individual and the ways these are afforded or constrained by situations, the hermeneutic perspective asks which characteristics, goals, and emotions are plausible and possible in the here and now, in chronic situations of one's daily existence, and in the times in which one lives. In this way, the selves we construct and aspire to become are fully and completely social.

SOCIALLY CONTEXTUALIZED POSITIONS

One's self-concept is a social construction. The language and symbols used to construct it are socially negotiated. It is organized in terms of socially salient values, attitudes, and meanings, and it is used to make sense of behaviors, aptitudes, and tendencies that have socially negotiated meaning and value. The self-concept can be thought of as a microcosm of one's cultural world, the universe within which meanings are constructed and their supporting practices distributed (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). These meanings and practices are largely taken for granted and "go without saying" (Holland & Quinn, 1987)—though they are the building blocks of self-definition, we may not notice them (e.g., Krull & Erickson, 1995). It is hardly surprising that this transparency of context has served to preserve our professional focus on the essentialized individual (Moscovici, 1993).

Yet it is clear that we "live" a culture. Core cultural ideals are given life in the practices, norms, and institutions of everyday life. For instance, the Euro-American middle-class cultural ideal of the individual as an autonomous, separate entity is maintained via schooling and caretaking practices that emphasize a link between feeling good and standing out, being better than the rest (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Middle-class classrooms set up a "good" student position that invokes these ideals. Similarly, Willis (1977/1981), in his classic essay, describes how working-class cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity are transmitted via peer, family, and neighborhood practices that view academic achievement as "mind work," as opposed to masculinity that is defined by "male" labor, work that involves physical exertion and some degree of risk or danger. Although not yet in the labor market, youth take up positions in their peer group and school that symbolize their future positions in the working-class community. For example, Willis (1977/1981) describes the symbolic importance to youth of openly defying school rules—it is not breaking the rules but breaking them publicly that makes a difference. These examples suggest that there may be a match or mismatch between the positions or ways of being that are made central in one

context—for example, school—and the positions or ways of being that are central in another context—for example, the home or peer group. Being defined in one context may limit the positions one can take up and the ways one can self-define in another.

The interdependence between collective reality—the seemingly external, public, political, and corporate—and individual reality—the seemingly internal personal, private, and corporeal—is structured by the positions accessible in one's face-to-face social contexts (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Individuals must make sense of themselves in terms of their own immediate reality. This reality is composed of immediate social settings (e.g., home, school), which in turn are made up of and shaped by a variety of sociopsychological processes such as linguistic conventions, socialization practices, and social scripts (e.g., Deaux & Major, 1987). These processes are themselves constituted by a particular historical-political context and the "imagined communities" of race, class, nationality, and so on (Anderson, 1991). Yet it is within the specific and recurrent interpersonal environments one inhabits, one's local world, that individuals must make sense of themselves—learn who one is and what is possible for the self (Shweder & Sullivan, 1990). We have sketched these themes out schematically in Figures 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3, using as an example the social world of a school child. Figure 8.1 depicts the embeddedness of face-to-face interactions in one's everyday social contexts and the embeddedness of these contexts in larger ethnic, racial, gender, and historical contexts. Broader contexts imbue meaning, structure possibilities, and create the scaffolding of face-to-face interactions. It is within face-to-face interactions, however, that identity is negotiated and maintained. In the particular example portrayed, a face-to-face school situation that overlaps with peer contexts, and family contexts in some ways, is portrayed. In the particular situation, two ways of being are made salient and are socially scaffolded. Figure 8.2 portrays the ways in which who we are, our sense of self, is constructed across contexts that vary in the positions, or ways of being, that are relevant within their confines. Thus, what is expressed in a situation is a function of both the situation and the individual (for a similar perspective, see Mischel, 1995).

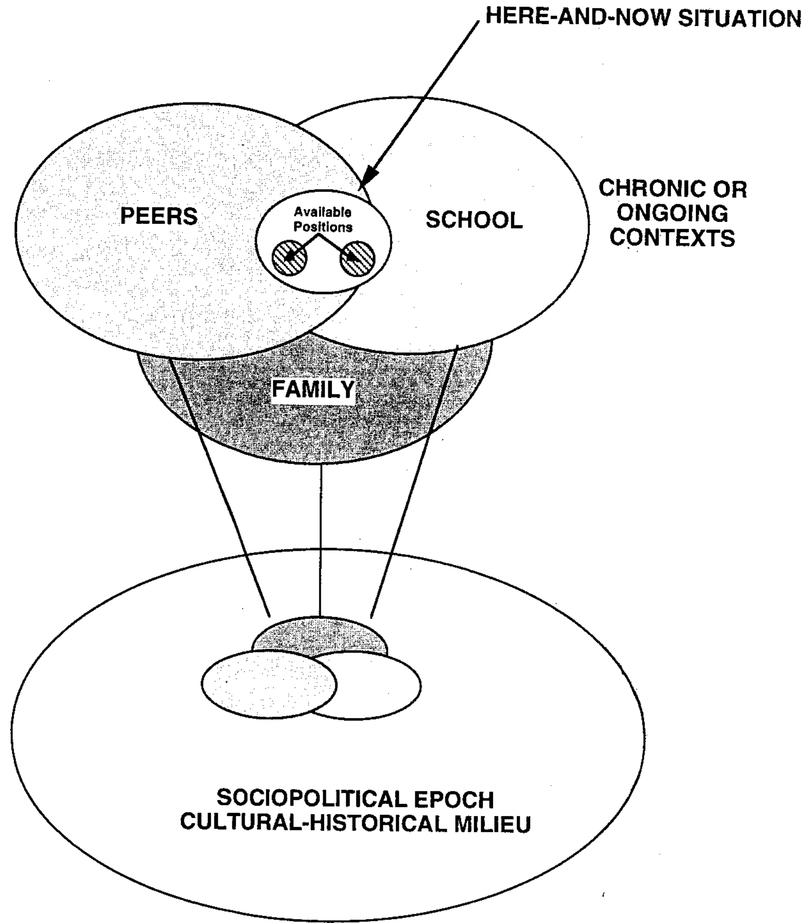


Figure 8.1. Levels of Social Context

Figure 8.3 outlines the ways in which this process results in both a stable and a dynamic or shifting sense of self. It is of note that especially dramatic shifts in situation and context are likely to produce the most discontinuity in self-concept as individuals struggle to learn and relearn how to be a self with new repertoires of positions.

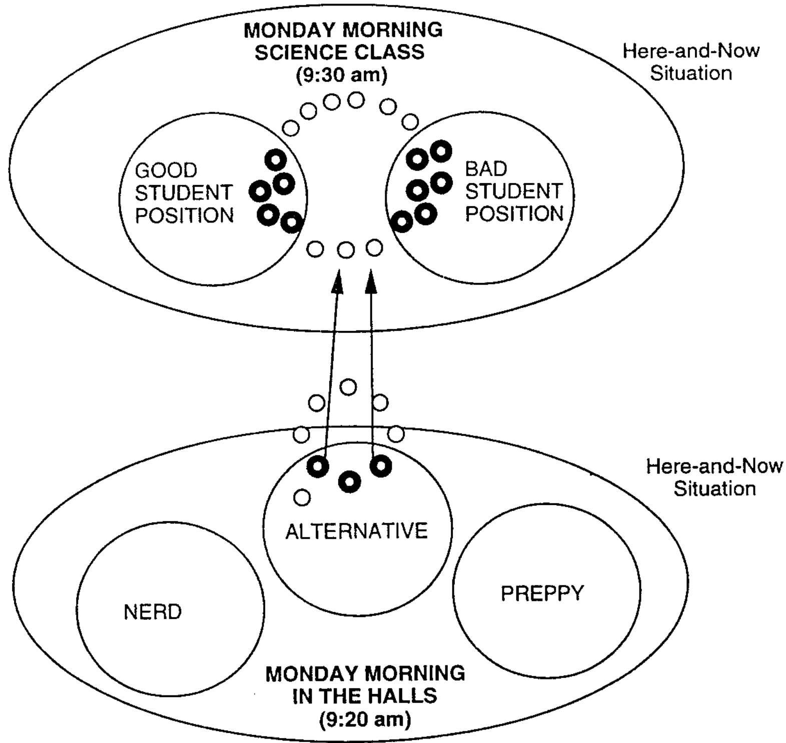


Figure 8.2. Instantiations of Self in Position

Of course, construals of social situations are personalized and therefore diverse. Yet there are commonalities across individual differences because these are powerfully afforded and constrained by situational realities. The positions one can take in a situation are limited. Attention is drawn to those positions that are central in one's context, and one's possible engagement in terms of these positions is operationalized in a language that makes sense in one's context (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995). These positions are organized within the moral space of one's here-and-now interactions and form the lexicon through which selves are conceptualized. The self, constructed and reconstructed within and

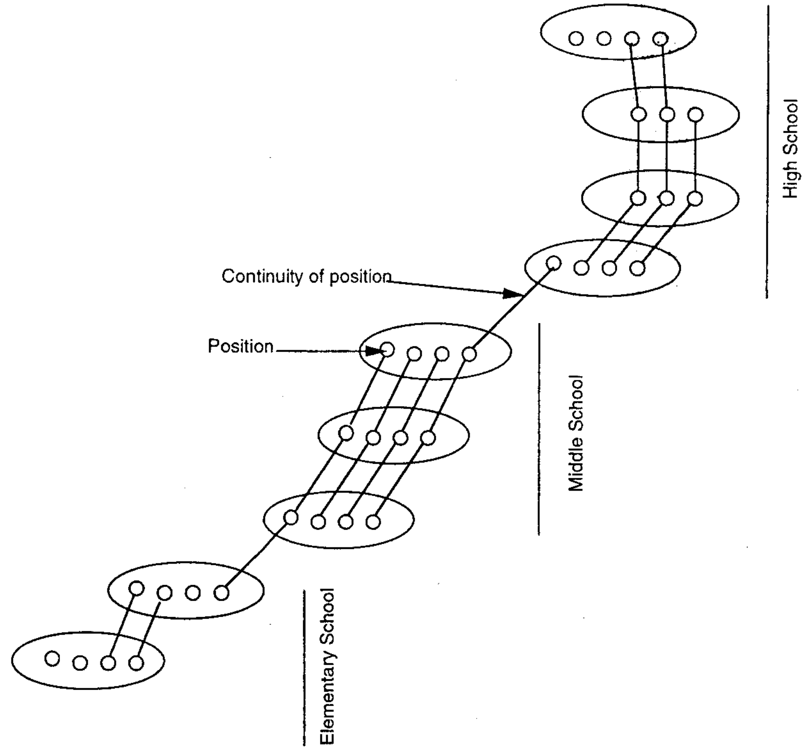


Figure 8.3. The Self Defined in Positions Set Up Within Here-and-Now Situations Across Time

across face-to-face interactions, is clearly not a random or accidental conglomeration of observations made by the self and others as to one's emotions, skills, characteristics, and attributes, nor is it a "complete set" of all possible self-relevant descriptors (e.g., Markus & Kunda, 1986; Mischel, 1995). Instead, individuals focus on, value, and delineate certain pieces of reality, those that are operationalized by the possible positions or ways of being in context.

Situationally salient positions delineate what a self is and what it is supposed to do—its goals or purposes. These in turn afford certain forms of self-content and certain sources of self-knowledge while

constraining others. Sources of self-knowledge are also goal linked; appropriate sources of information and feedback about the self are contextually defined (Nuttin, 1984). The self is not merely a conglomerate of content. As a cognitive structure and information-processing agent (Markus, 1977), the self functions to organize our experiences and motivate action (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Oyserman & Markus, 1993). Thus, as Taylor (1989) writes, "To know who you [are] is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you, and what is trivial and secondary" (p. 28). Typically, psychologists describing identity as a social process have focused on identity as an ongoing negotiation in the tradition of symbolic interactionism (Stryker, 1987). Yet the question of levels of contextual embeddedness, the ways in which identity is negotiated from a relatively short list of relevant possibilities in a given situation and the ways that these situations might interact with one another, has been insufficiently studied, particularly in the life period of adolescence. In the following section, we will outline this process for adolescents.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN ADOLESCENCE

In Western industrialized societies, adolescence is described as a time of identity negotiation. Youths are said to be "in search of" themselves, "discovering" themselves or alternatively "making something" of themselves. Possible identities are to be tried on and the likelihood of actually being such a self is socially negotiated (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990; Stryker, 1987). Past identities and one's skills and abilities are melded to become plausible and at least reasonably satisfying adult selves (Cantor, Norem, Niedenthal, Langston, & Brower, 1987; Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994).

Although providing some important insights, this "identity negotiation" model does not pay enough attention to context. By focusing on interpersonal negotiation, larger issues of context are given short

shrift. The ways in which sociocultural context scaffolds and informs what can be negotiated interpersonally is not taken into account. Negotiation-based models overlook the ways in which context colors interactions. Once a set of positions becomes salient, identity construction must take these into account even when they are not in the best interest of the individual. The rapidly expanding literature on stereotyping, for example, suggests that power differentials set up situations in which the powerless are likely to be stereotyped, that is, made sense of in terms of a small and intransient set of possible positions (Fiske, 1993a). In addition, others in one's own context purvey messages about which characteristics of the self are valued and important; they are resources, providing experiences of success and competence in the roles that are culturally represented as key to adult status and attainments (Crane, 1991; Ogbu, 1991; Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman & Markus, 1993). It is within particular contexts that youth are provided with educational, economic, and other resources, sometimes termed "cultural capital," a capital that is context relevant (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Ogbu, 1991).

Furthermore, by implying that all identities may be equally negotiated and minimizing the effect of contextually relevant opportunities on the identity construction process, the identity negotiation model typically ignores the fact that for many youth, the self one could be as an adult is rapidly bounded by an increasingly detailed and limited array of plausible alternatives given past and current attainments and resources available in one's sociocultural context (Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman & Markus, 1993). Thus, though sometimes conceptualized as a psychosocial moratorium in which a limitless array of identities are "tried on," adolescence seems to involve a general restriction of alternatives for many youth. Their contexts simply do not define many positions for them to attain.

This is particularly likely to be the case for urban, working-class, or minority youth embedded in contexts that do not afford visions of oneself as succeeding in school. If youth come to view school success as unlikely, they are likely to lose interest and become less involved in school (e.g., Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 1995). Yet in U.S. society, school success is clearly a gatekeeper for adult possibilities and

resources. Furthermore, normative nonschool-related contexts are not easy to come by in these settings; youth who disengage from school are left with peer and family contexts only. There are positions one can take up in these contexts even when the context of school is reduced in centrality, for example, being a good son or daughter, being a friend, or being accepted. Yet when positions within the family context are not reinforced by school context and positions in the peer context are not constrained by positions in the school context, then more involvement in risky or deviant behaviors is likely (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Freedman-Doan, Arbreton, Harold, & Eccles, 1993; Harter, 1990; Henggeler, 1991; Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1992; Oyserman, 1993). Perhaps this is because in our society, without the context of school, the parent-family context alone does not provide access to positions that scaffold the transition to adult roles other than parenthood. Similarly, without the constraining influence of the school context on the ways positions can be operationalized in the peer context, being accepted can focus on involvement in delinquent activities. This process has less to do with the specific interpersonal negotiations through which identities are tried out, confirmed, or reframed than with the limitations of the positions that can be taken up in these social contexts. Furthermore, recent work in cognitive development suggests that without a relatively wide open space or array of possible positions, it may be extremely difficult for youth to develop the cognitive skills necessary to strategize attainment of more long-term and abstract possible selves (e.g., Kuhn, 1995). Thus, youths attempt to create a sense of who they can be now and as adults, given what they understand a person—a man or a woman—can be in their everyday contexts. If the positions available in these contexts are limited, so are their possible selves.

By taking a more contextualized perspective, we propose to make sense of identity as a process of symbolic construction. The individual and the social groups within which he or she is embedded use symbols and devices that have meaning in a particular context to construct who one is and who one could be. Symbols and devices operationalize contextually relevant positions, and it is attainment of these positions that is negotiated interpersonally. Identity then is not wholly "inside"

the person; it is a continuous, social production (Harre & Gillett, 1994). For example, in an Ann Arbor middle school, there are "nerds," "preps," and "alternatives." These positions define who one can be in the peer context at school; as such they require others. They are social at their core. One Ann Arbor teen describes the process by which 6th graders need to "learn" these possible positions: "In 6th grade you watch and copy." Possible positions vary in terms of dress, music, contact with members of the opposite sex, relations with one another, and connectedness with school. They require others who are conversant in the symbols and devices through which attainment of a position can be conveyed. Thus, being an alternative requires others; clothes signal attitudes ("We wear shirts other kids wouldn't, like bowling alley shirts or our father's old corduroys" and "We get good grades but don't care about it as much as the 'nerds' ") and also something about parent-child relations ("Alternatives have a life—we get together with our friends on weekends and half days. Nerds don't have time because they are too busy with schoolwork and extra lessons like music. Their parents don't let them be with friends") (quotes from a 13-year-old middle school female). Without the cooperation of others in establishing meaning, the clothing would merely appear to be a somewhat sloppy version of the general teen garb. Youth can dress like a group member and try to take up a position but not be accepted as such ("He dresses like a prep but he is a nerd").

SELF AS SOCIALLY STRUCTURED

We propose that within social contexts, here-and-now, face-to-face situations set up moral spaces or positions that operationalize the relevant ways of being in that situation. These positions function as common denominators that structure the engagement of individuals in the situation such that there will be some important commonalities in the selves created by those living in these contexts. An understanding or appreciation of the social representations that structure the self and give it its particular shape or nature, the goals of selfhood, and what one is to be doing to be a self all flow from the

positions available in one's here-and-now situations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, 1993; Stryker, 1987). In this framework, the self is viewed as the nexus of social representations derived from the social contexts within which the individual is embedded (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). By setting up representations of what it is to be a "good person," each of these contexts makes some claim on the person, structures a set of practices and ideas, and, most important perhaps, organizes and gives meaning to the "reality" we perceive, the issues we see as having meaning (Holland & Quinn, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; White, 1992). Although we understand ourselves within the possibilities set up by the contexts in which we are situated and it is within these contexts that we forge a sense of ourselves, this structuration is not necessarily experienced as such. Through a series of discrete and ongoing interactions, we accommodate, take into account, and organize in terms of even those social representations that are detrimental, oppressing, or limiting (Showers, 1992). Thus, an African American from Chicago describes going to school and the meaning of going to school ("making it"):

> I've always liked going to school but in our neighborhood there were a lot of thugs and a lot of gang-bangers. Most of the gang-bangers now are drug dealers. . . . In the area where I was staying, I had been around some of the gang-bangers or I had cousins or uncles who were a part of the gangs and had been in them for a while. Thugs are gang-bangers; niggers that try to bully you, take your money and lunch, beat you up for no reason. . . . They beat you up and stuff like that. And that was kind of hard because I always had to have the fear of getting jumped on; running back and forth, running here and there, trying to find my way through this stuff, trying to get over and make it. (Johnson, 1995, pp. 14-15)

Whereas simply "going to school" may not be part of the good student position in all contexts, it is clear that going to school in this context meant a choice and an effortful behavioral sequence and likely was part of the good student position in this context.

Individuals live in contexts that provide both congruent (cross-contextual) and incongruent (context variable) messages about how

to be a self, who to compare oneself to, the meaning and likelihood of success, and so on. Within a series of specific face-to-face, here-and-now situations, possible positions or ways of being are delineated and individuals must take these positions into account in defining who they are and what is possible for them (for a similar argument, see Farr, 1987). Thus, a Latina adolescent may become engaged at the age of 14 because it is normative in her neighborhood culture but at the same time value education and hope to become a psychiatrist. The contradictions between these must be dealt with in the terms laid out by the contexts and interchanges she herself is a part of (Pastor, McCormick, & Fine, in press).

SELF-CONCEPT IN CONTEXT

The self is an organized locus of contextually anchored understandings of how to be a person, and it functions as an individualized orienting, mediating, interpretive framework giving shape to what people notice, think about, feel, and are motivated to do. What we do is due to the sense we make of our context and the positions available in this context. In the previous example, early engagement is understood as a sign of respect and serious intentions on the part of the male, and good girls are understood to become engaged young; thus, young adolescents, whatever their aspirations, feel constrained to accommodate to cultural framing. Another example of the ways contexts set up the possible positions of males and females is set out in high relief in the following description by an adolescent male of sexual relations.

> You can talk to a girl a couple of hours and, you know, wind up in bed with her. You can talk to a chick. You got it . . . most guys feel like, "This is a piece; I'm going to go ahead and get it." They don't really think, "Well, is she pregnant? Do she want to be pregnant?" I feel that . . . either she is burning, meaning that she has some kind of venereal disease, or she is pregnant already and she is trying to get a scapegoat or she want to get pregnant because she thinks you got some money. (Johnson, 1995, p. 18)

In this inner-city Chicago context, girls are at once objectified ("This is a piece") and also feared (". . . because she thinks you got some money"). Adolescent females will need to take these positions (being a desired object, being threatening) into account in making sense of the responses of young males to them. Whether they choose to define themselves in opposition to or in terms of these positions, they cannot be simply ignored because it is in terms of these positions that young males make sense of young females. When sexualized and negative images of women are consistently part of one's face-to-face situation, it may be difficult or impossible to negotiate shared reality with an alternative, that is, a more positive self-defining position (e.g., Deaux, 1995).

In the domain of school and schooling, what it means to be a good student depends on the moral space or positions in one's here-and-now situations. The specific content of these positions can differ broadly with important consequences. If being a good student is conceived of in terms of being independent and creative and having innate abilities, one will experience school differently and be motivated to behave differently than if being a good student is conceived of in terms of acceptance of hierarchy, attaining preestablished standards, and the importance of perseverance. But where do these positions come from? They are structured, we will argue, in the specific circumstances of one's contexts.

CONTEXT DELIMITED

Until now we have focused on the specific interchanges in the unfolding "situation" of one's daily life. It is also possible to look across situations at the contexts of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic class and the situations likely to be encountered by individuals in these contexts. Authors studying adolescence have often noted the importance of understanding the ways these contexts operate on individuals. Thus, "the findings of race, ethnic and gender differences are so ubiquitous that the case has been made that the effects of other distal or proximate variables depend on these" (Day,

1992, p. 750). It is the interplay between and among contexts within a particular historical era that delineates the self as a complex social cognizer. Thus, we define ourselves in terms made relevant by standards, mores, values, and goals of larger society and the interplay between these and the standards, mores, values, and goals of the groups to which we belong (e.g., Hogan, 1989). To the extent that we perceive ourselves and are perceived by others as belonging to groups in addition to or instead of the implied larger societal group (of middle class, white, and male), then the mores, standards, and values of larger society recede in relevance as the unique standards, values, and mores of these groups become more salient. What stands out, what is relevant and processed in a context, is that which has bearing on these standards and mores (e.g., Schneider & Yongsook, 1990). Contextual meanings may be congruent or incongruent to the mores of larger society; mores may also be complementary. It has been argued, for example, that certain understandings of homosexuals, women, and people of color are required by working-class men in defining themselves as working- class men (Fine, 1995). More broadly, women and men occupy positions that afford and constrain certain ways of being. Eagly (1995) summarizes the ways in which men and women are conceptualized, showing that men are defined in terms of their agency and women in terms of their nurturance. According to her analysis, what is critical about being a woman is that one is not a man: Maleness implicates power, and femaleness implicates lack of power. Other research reviewed by Deaux (1995) suggests that one of the most consistent female stereotypes is one that defines females in sexual terms and excludes work-relevant terms. Women may choose to self-define as not nurturant or as agentic, but this self-concept must take into account the vocabulary others will use in making sense of them. This process occurs both as males define females and as females define themselves. "People signal their [subject] position through their identification with a particular local moral world—a community whose symbolic boundaries are largely determined by the shared subject of its members in relation to other status groups" (Shaw, 1994, p. 111).

Looking at race, we can see a similar process. For example, in contemporary America, it is likely that blacks interacting with non-blacks must take race into account in defining themselves because race is defined as important, as having meaning, and as providing information in the larger societal context (e.g., Dole, 1995; Eisenman, 1995). Early theorizing focused on the presumed "master status" of some social roles such that one may be considered black first and anything else second (Becker, 1963). Judd (1993) recently found that blacks are viewed as athletic, musical, fun-loving, religious, violent, loud, uneducated, and irresponsible by whites. One may choose to use this vocabulary to self-define or attempt to define in terms of the "vocabulary" used to define whites (independent, ambitious, intelligent, self-centered, uptight, greedy, racist, and wealthy). In either case, however, this template or grid must be taken into account. The social representation of blackness produces a vocabulary, a prism, or a lens through which the self is viewed. Allen, Thornton, and Watkins (in press) provide another example of how this process works. They show that both blacks and whites describe blacks as religious, musical, pleasure-loving, lazy, and superstitious. To this representational rubric, blacks add some unique African American representations of blackness: intelligent, athletic, loud, with rhythm, and sportsmanlike. Steele, Spencer, and Aronson (1995) describe the stereotype vulnerability of African Americans, arguing that academically competent blacks underperform on average when their membership in this social category is made salient. Moving to the next level of contextual complexity, we can ask how the interplay between race and gender or race and class (or race, class, and gender) impacts on these rubrics. We propose that individuals do not simply draw information from each context in an additive fashion but rather that contexts structure meanings interactively. Thus, because blacks vary in socioeconomic status, markers of "being" black are likely to differ within blacks as a group. To the extent that larger society assumes a middle-class stance, being black and middle-class may be less distinctive than being black and poor. However, because blacks are disproportionately likely to be poor, both social representations about poverty and the self-definitional meaning of poverty are likely to color the ways in

which blacks represent themselves as a group. Following theories of distinctiveness-based identity and social categorization (e.g., Nelson & Miller, 1995), middle-class blacks may view blacks as more indistinguishable from larger society than will poor blacks. In fact, Allen, Thornton, and Watkins (in press) did find that higher socioeconomic status (SES) African Americans have fewer positive and negative images of African Americans, viewing them as more indistinguishable from the majority, whereas those with lower SES are more likely to view African Americans as distinct from the larger group.

Through this process, gender, socioeconomic class, race-ethnicity, and the interplay among them infuse meaning into the everyday contexts of school, peer group, and family. Thus, being female, working-class, or white each sets up likely ways of engaging in the moral space of one's here-and-now social situations. The moral space organized by small groups in here-and-now situations affords certain engagements and constrains others; individuals must both define in terms of what they are and also in terms of what they are not in spite of expectations that they will be. In this vein, we have hypothesized that in urban contexts, a triadic structure of ethnic identity may be vital in facilitating engagement with school and schooling. Specifically, we have hypothesized that youth who (a) conceptualize themselves in terms of connectedness with the black community, (b) have identified ways in which being African American may be negatively stereotyped or result in obstacles to advancement, and (c) view school as part of being African American will be better equipped to keep trying to do well in school, will view school success as self-defining, and will therefore perform better and persist longer at school-related tasks (Oyserman et al., 1995). This triadic structure of identity takes into account cultural traditions of communal helping, family aid and connectedness, the legacy of racism (Asante, 1987, 1988; Martin & Martin, 1985), and cultural imperatives based on the Protestant work ethic to be independent, successful, achieving, and self-focused (Katz & Hass, 1988). Making sense of the self in terms of connectedness and awareness of racism and viewing school achievement as part of being African American may therefore be vital in promoting engagement in school (Oyserman et al., 1995). Our empirical research

suggests that these components of identity do promote persistence and performance in school, particularly for females (Oyserman & Burks, 1995; Oyserman et al., 1995). In this sequence of studies, our data suggest that for males, ethnic identity per se does not predict school persistence. Rather, it is the future-oriented element of the self-concept, the content of one's possible selves, that seems to make a difference. Thus, especially for males, it appears central that school success be viewed as possible and plausible and that self-relevant strategies for avoiding problems in school be articulated. Unanswered in these initial studies is the question "What does it mean to be a good student, and how is this position articulated in here-and-now situations?" To explore this issue, we have engaged in an ethnographic study of a predominantly blue-collar community in Michigan, half an hour from Detroit. Because the town has only one middle school where we conducted our research, we do not name the town because to do so would be to violate the anonymity of the participants. Our fieldwork in the middle school suggests that in this context, students and teachers hold positions represented in terms of kinds of authority and responsibility. Teachers have authority and responsibility to give directions and maintain order; students have responsibility to be silent, obedient, sit in place, and follow directions. "Doing your job" is a central phrase used to describe the good student role. The "job" most commonly is what the teacher defines it to be so that accomplishments are viewed as fulfilling obligations. It seems that this process sets up a continuation of a working-class ethic among youth as they move toward adulthood (Harvey, 1990). Good students are not defined in terms of learning, knowing, and having initiative but rather in terms of completing externally organized tasks, following rules, and not interfering.

CLASSROOM AS CONTEXT

Schools help reproduce the social order by teaching youth knowledge and skills but also by introducing them to the values of society (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Fine, 1995). It has become apparent that schools are institutions in which identities are constructed and in

which youth come to adopt particular ways to be, not just things to know. Because school as a context structures a large part of youth's everyday experiences, whether they choose to attend or not, school frames responses to basic questions such as, "Who am I?" "What do I care about?" and "What do I expect in the future?" Identities are formed both in relation to the social group of peers—the nerds, the preps, and the alternatives—and in relation to teachers, as we will describe below. Parents, churches, and other social contexts may serve to focus youth's attention on school, highlighting or defusing the centrality of this context for other life domains.

The school classroom provides an important group setting in which identity is constructed. It involves participation and membership in a specific community and, hence, familiarity with positions relevant to this community, shared practices, and a normative. For example, school can emphasize mental labor as opposed to manual labor, allowing for the practice of one and devaluating the other.

Yet clearly, the positions set up by the school are not equally accepted by all students. School positions focus on what is valued, what it means to be a "good" student, and what it means to be a "bad" student. In essence, if all students focused equally on attaining a good student position, everyone would be a nerd. The fact that there are additional groups reflects the additional postures and attitudes toward schooling—and the positions that can be taken up with regard to school. Youth bring with them the positions established in their peer contexts and apply these to the positions set up by the school. Some ways of being that are viewed as good student and some viewed as bad student are carried from peer context to school and influence youth's stance or the positions they can take up. Thus, the alternatives position is that of nonconformist in the peer context; some of the behaviors that symbolize this may be viewed as bad student behaviors in the context of school—talking loudly, dying hair, wearing unusual clothing—even though the alternatives accept school, view school as important, and aspire to some portions of the good student position. To understand the normative framework of the classroom, we focused on the explicit reference to norms and values made by the sixth-grade teachers in the beginning of the school year. We chose to

focus on entry into sixth grade as it involves entry into middle school; as a transition time, it would likely provide articulation of frame as it is not yet routine or assumed. At entry into middle school, the teacher must draw the students' attention to what counts as violation of the frame. We found that "doing" versus "not doing your job" seems key to the classroom's moral space. The teacher makes this explicit by illuminating the concept: "People are sitting here not doing their job." Doing your job seems to entail both positive actions and avoidance of negative actions. On the one hand it means taking notes, having responsibility to team, providing information, giving the teacher attention, doing what a teacher tells you to do, walking quietly in the corridors, and so on. On the other hand it means not having an attitude, not getting on someone's case ("that's my job," says the teacher), not forgetting to bring books to class ("that's your job"), not being tardy, not using bad language, not wasting time ("You wasted a minute of your passing time"), not being "rude" (i.e., talking while others talk), and not socializing. Although most frequently ways of being a student are defined in terms of positive and negative actions, sometimes, good and bad student roles are defined more globally. The teacher says, "Finishing books is wonderful," "It's in your best interest to read," and "Use this time wisely" ("Don't waste time, spend it wisely") and emphasizes keeping up the class's reputation as compared with another teacher. Being a good student is framed as doing your job in this predominantly blue-collar industrial town where employment has traditionally focused on the auto assembly plant. And doing your job translates into doing what the teacher tells you is your job, even though teachers try to transfer ownership of the job to students. "Someone read our mission—what our job is going to be" (sixth-grade teacher, middle school, small town half an hour from Detroit). Possible positions for youth in the normative framework of the classroom can be organized in terms of two central dimensions, or axes. The first focuses on doing your job versus wasting time and being rude. The second focuses on the locus of responsibility—internal, "you are responsible for your own work," versus external, "Do I need to tell you what to do?" At the start of the year, most violations of the normative frame seem to be occasions when a youth does not do what he or she has been told to do. The teacher has made it clear that he or she expects that youth will come to do their job without needing to be told; the responsibility will become theirs. Though sometimes youth are viewed as being deliberately bad—choosing the bad student role—teachers frame youth behaviors mostly in terms of not yet grasping their responsibilities and a need for external (teacher-located) responsibility. When a student is viewed as deliberately breaking rules or deliberately not bringing books to class, he or she is treated differently, that is, afforded different ways of being.

Thus, in a community organized around one stable employment base—automobile production—studentness invokes doing your job in a way that connects youth with work on the assembly line. The stability of this representation once created is illuminated by the fact that the automobile plant on which local job structure was based announced its closing 3 years ago. In the wake of this, the school received funding to engage in systemwide change, to refocus the goals of education. The reform efforts require changing the social representation of studentness specifically and being from the town more generally, not just in the classroom but more pervasively, in each of the contexts in which the here-and-now situation of the classroom is embedded—the school, the family, the peer group, and the community and region. When the positions available in the family and peer group do not mesh well with those of school or when the school seeks to define new positions, it is likely that the engagement of students with school will be problematic. Youth cannot merely bring with them their at-home ways of being; school-relevant positions may not translate well from school to the world outside school either. Our fieldwork suggests that parents have not experienced school as being relevant to their jobs or their lives after school. This working-class expectation that schooling is a phase to be gotten through rather than a preparation for the world of work means that students acting consistently and coherently within this expectation would not come to value schooling or the learning and knowledge to be gained in this framework. The closing of the automobile assembly plant means that the community can no longer safely expect reasonably well-paid and stable employment independent of schooling. The goal of the current

school initiative is to develop a way of integrating schooling with the transition to adulthood and the world of work.

CONCLUSION

The account we developed is one in which identity is not a fixed property of an individual but a temporal accomplishment that must be constructed and reconstructed. It is an ongoing effort to grasp and bring together what one knows of one's past skills and attributes, one's present characteristics and abilities, one's plausible future, and one's hopes and fears with regard to the self one might become (Cantor, 1994; Oyserman & Markus, 1993). This effort engenders a series of relatively concrete and discrete strategic moves as well as a repertoire of strategies to be tried and retried in one's ongoing efforts to create and maintain a self (Sanderson & Cantor, 1995). Very concretely, identity is what one has and who one is. It is the bringing together of one's past with one's current circumstances to project and anticipate some kind of comprehensible and plausible possible future and organize one's behaviors toward this possible self (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). Identity is situational, relational, and libidinal, "forged through a certain temporal unification of the past and future with the present before me" (Jameson, quoted in Harvey, 1990, p. 53). To the extent that personally meaningful projects are to be pursued over time, this self must be constructed and reconstructed with a focus on the possibility of engaging in activities that "make" or "create" the self one is striving to become (Cantor, 1994).

Identity is both highly personal, an individually crafted achievement, and also a social construction or culturally assigned social representation. The two identities, the sociocultural side and the psychological, must both be taken into account. Thus, identity is always both "outside in" and "inside out." It is the way we are defined by other people and the way we define ourselves through our actions and symbolic interactions (e.g., Aronson, Cooper, & Blanton, 1995). In addition, the very issues of concern, the qualities and characteristics that are important and therefore self-defining, are social

constructs. Views, values, goals, and patterns of reciprocity are sociocultural constructions that, in many ways, "come with the territory" or are built into context. Being a teen involves different behaviors, beliefs, and motivations among the Baining of New Britain, Papua, New Guinea, than it does for a middle-class white American teen in Ann Arbor, Michigan (see Fajans, 1985). Even in the American context, what it means to be a teen and what teens can do and be is an evolving and hotly contested issue. Thus we ask, "Is work good or bad?" (Bachman, Johnson, & O'Malley, 1982) and "What about sexuality?" (Harter, 1990).

In our previous studies with youth in Detroit, we have found that youth who have a "balanced" vision of themselves in the domain of school—youth who view both doing well and also doing poorly in school as possibly self-defining (Oyserman & Markus, 1990)—youth who believe that they are trying to become like the positive possible self and avoid the negative one (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993), and youth who have strategies to avoid failure in this domain (Oyserman & Burks, 1995) are likely to be less involved in delinquent activities and perform better in school. Yet the specific content of these identities, what it means to be a good student, will differ by context.

Thus, identity can be thought of as a social cognitive process and structure. Striving to answer the "Who am I?" question makes key and central both certain end states and certain ways of being or self-processes. One's sense of self, which focuses one's attention, information processing, and motivational resources, may scaffold and organize the sense we make of our everyday lives and behavioral opportunities. Thus, if being a good student is central to who I am and if I view school success as a plausible possible self and school failure as something to be avoided, this social identity may color or organize how I am in the world—the goals I seek to pursue, the information I seek in interactions with others, and so on (Oyserman et al., 1995). We have sought to address the varied ways that being a good student might be a plausible or implausible self-definition for youths in contemporary, and particularly urban, settings and in this way explore the self as a social cognitive process.