

Commitment to Self-Identification: A Sociopsychological Approach to Personality'

Richard T. Santee

University of Minnesota, Morris

Susan E. Jackson'

University of California, Berkeley

This paper describes a self-systemic approach to the study of personality structure and process. Personality is conceptualized as organized around the ways one is committed to identifying oneself. Central to personality structure are those social roles the person is committed to performing. These role identities are the fundamental criteria by which goals, activities, and situations are selected by the person. Associated with role identities are identity goals, self-attributed characteristics that the person is motivated to exemplify when he or she is performing a particular role identity. Normative expectations are the person's beliefs as to which behaviors will express his or her identity goals. Data from a longitudinal and a cross-sectional sample of students supported this conceptualization. The theory is contrasted with the traditional self-concept approach, and is applied to an analysis of personality consistency; development, and adaptability.

INTRODUCTION

This past decade has seen a challenge to personality theory (e.g., Mischel, 1968) and a careful rethinking of that construct (e.g., Bowers, 1973; Wachtel, 1973). A recurrent theme in this literature is that personality

¹This research was supported by a grant-in-aid of research from the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota to Richard T. Santee, who is now at the University of California at Berkeley.

²Requests for reprints should be sent to Susan E. Jackson, Department of Psychology, 3210 Tolman Hall, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.

is in some sense an *organization* that characterizes an individual. In 1937, Allport provided this definition: "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment." More recently, symbolic interactionists have described personal organization as a hierarchy of social positions (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), of role identities (McCall & Simmons, 1966), and of commitments (Stryker, 1968). In the tradition of an integrative perspective, the present paper presents a model of personality as a system of self-identifications, the most central of which are commitments to role identities.

Today, systems theory has advanced to the point that Allport's rudimentary conceptualization can be improved. An individual is at one and the same time a biological system with associated organic functions, a member of social systems with associated rights and obligations of membership, and a personality system that in some degree organizes its own activity in a fashion that is not simply reducible to organic or social system levels of analysis (Allport, 1960; Miller, 1970). Systems theorists (e.g., Buckley, 1967) have persuasively argued that there are qualitative differences among types of systems; mixing concepts that refer to different types of systems results in explanatory confusion. Recently, some behavioral scientists have tended to reduce personal functioning solely to environmental contingencies, which of course is a mistake if one wishes to study the integrity of the personality system. Similarly, unless one intends to reduce personal functioning to the level of the organic system, the inclusion of physiological characteristics in the definition of personality (e.g., Allport's reference to "psychophysical systems") is a conceptual error (Parsons, 1968).

Furthermore, some aspects of organic systems, such as homeostasis, probably are inapplicable to personality as a system. Instead, personality should be defined as a purposive system (in contrast to those that are homeostatic or equilibrating). Such systems are *goal-directed*, and not merely goal-oriented, since it is the deviations from the goal state itself that direct the behavior of the system" (Buckley, 1967, p. 53). Thus, the person evaluates discrepancies between life events and goals; the discrepancies give rise to intentions and plans to reduce the divergence. It is not our purpose to catalog the many ways in which reduction may be accomplished, though it is the hallmark of a sophisticated purposive system that it is also *goal-selecting*, and therefore reduction may occur through modification of the person's goals.

Not only is a person goal-directed, but the personality system, in common with systems in general, resists intrusions from outside itself that decrease the system's organization (Buckley, 1967). Accordingly, a food-deprived individual can resist hunger pangs from the organic system and continue on a diet toward a goal of weight loss, or decline a sexual oppor-

tunity from the social system in order to continue the life of a celibate. Goal directedness and resistance to intrusion are affected by a number of factors, such as the incentive value of the goal and nearness to its consummation (Klinger, 1977). However, these factors operate within the personality system and, besides affecting goal-directed behavior, are themselves subject to the organization of that system.

A person's activities are goal-directed, and in turn these goals, rather than being selected and modified willy-nilly, are organized around self-identifications to which the person is *committed*. Identity commitments serve as boundary criteria or gatekeepers in determining how motivations from the organic and social systems (deprivations and press, respectively) will be handled, i.e., how the personality will adjust to its environment. A person committed to the identity of "dieter" will interpret and treat hunger pangs differently than one committed to an "epicurean" identity. Looking at the individual interpersonally, someone who identifies herself as "married" will construe a male's amorous persuasion differently than one who sees herself as "single."

Self-identification serves to organize the person. Generically, "an act of identification requires that the thing referred to be placed within a category" (Strauss, 1959, p. 19). By identifying or naming oneself, a person provides a "directive for action," as if to say-I am this kind of person: "act in the appropriate way toward me," and I will act in the appropriate way toward you. Of course, the specifics of what are appropriate ways of acting are often at issue, and research is proceeding at the social systemic (interpersonal) level on such matters as the negotiation of identity (Blumstein, 1973). However, at the personality-system level, the problem is one of ascertaining how self-identification organizes the person and his or her activity, an organization that surely arises out of the person's relationships to others, but which in turn will resist to a degree interactional pressures toward change, as well as select out hospitable environments conducive to self-stability (Wachtel, 1973).

As a descriptive model of personality functioning, it is suggested that people intend to select and pursue goals in a fashion that maintains or enhances those identities to which they are committed. This approach to personality may appear to have much in common with a self-concept perspective on personality. While they share the emphasis on self-reference, there are several aspects of the extant self-concept literature that render it conceptually inadequate (Wylie, 1974). First, self-concept research fails to specify the types of situations in which the person has particular concepts of self. People identify themselves in context, not in a void, a fact of which psychologists have long been aware and to which they have recently been resensitized (e.g., Bowers, 1973). To differing extents, people are committed to different identities in various situations. For example, in the routine situa-

tions of "watching TV at home with the family" and "going to church on Sunday morning," people have different concerns about how they look, sound, and behave; they literally name themselves differently and act in ways which they hope will manifest their identities to relevant audiences. In general, people anchor their self-identifications in situations, with some people being, say, "friendly" or "conscientious" in all situations, but others presenting those attributes contingently, depending on the situation (Bern & Allen, 1974).

Self-identifications are not only rooted in situations; they are also organized around relationships to others. From the point of view of the acting person, roles (socially recognized parts available for performance in social situations) are opportunities to express self-identifications. Roles are offered or assigned to a person by others, or the person may proffer the performance of a role to others. Either way, the opportunities to express one's self-identifications often are found in one's relationships to others, and a relationship permitting satisfying expression of self-identification will have powerful effects on the person. Thus, one becomes committed to identifying oneself not only in particular kinds of situations, but also within the matrix of important relationships that one cares to maintain.

A second problem with a self-concept approach to personality is its failure to treat effectively the directionality of self-identification. Identifying oneself as a scholar, an artist, or a football player, carries with it personal interpretations of what orientations and attributes those kinds of people have if they are good at what they do. As a class, these orientations and attributes can be termed *identity goals*, since individuals will strive to express them in their actions, and they include those value orientations (Feather, 1975), motives (Mills, 1940), attitudes, and traits that the person interprets as demonstrating his or her worth as a role actor. One might believe, for example, that football players are brave, artists are sensitive, and scholars are smart.

The person engages in a process of interpreting his or her identity goals, forming plans to exemplify the goals in activity. Thus, associated with identity goals are *normative expectations*, notions of what behaviors will appropriately "operationalize" the goal qualities of one's self-identifications. For example, a firm commitment to identifying oneself as "aggressive" in one's relationships with sports-minded peers will be associated with dozens of activities that one will interpret proscriptively and prescriptively. (These same activities may be interpreted quite differently in a relationship with one's mother, though.) In sum, the directions a person's activity takes in various situations and relationships are contingent on whom the person is attempting to be. Self-concept research fails to investigate the directional quality of people's self-identifications.

Finally, self-concept research must deal with personality structure, analyzing major "dimensions" and aspects of personal "organization" with respect to "centrality, visibility, and importance" (Gough, 1976, p. 575). Self-concept research has not satisfactorily handled these matters (Wylie, 1974), although conceptualizations such as McCall and Simmons' (1966) and Stryker's (1968) have moved in the right direction. They argue that central to the personality structure are important role identities—the social roles the person is committed to performing. According to this view, role identities are the fundamental criteria by which goals, activities, and situations are selected by the person, at least when observed within a time frame of weeks or months. Thus, to understand the personality system, one must inquire into those role identities to which a person is committed, and the associated activities in which the person feels he or she should and should not engage.

In order to explore the usefulness of a self-systemic approach to personality, we carried out two empirical studies employing the concepts of role identity (a socially recognized part that a person is committed to performing), identity goal (self-identifications toward which one strives), and identity expectation (beliefs that one should and should not engage in certain activities in order to achieve an identity goal). Commitment to role identities is hypothesized to be associated with the strength of expectations that the person holds for behaviors relevant to goals associated with the identities.

METHOD

Overview

Three students enrolled at a liberal arts university in the Midwest participated in a longitudinal study of their self-systems. This 4-month investigation probed the ways the students organized their self-identifications in relation to the people they knew. A cross-sectional survey of 55 students in a psychology class provided some validity data.

Selection of Longitudinal Subjects

The names of several first-year students living on campus were selected from university enrollment lists. They were contacted by telephone and given a brief summary of the study. Two females and one male, freshmen, 18 and 19 years old, and living with roommates, were contracted to

take part in the study for pay, and signed consent forms which detailed their responsibilities in the study.

Instruments

A major reason for conducting this research was to develop procedures for investigating identity structure, identity goals, and expectations. During the first month of the study, subjects met individually with the researchers, who interviewed them concerning their daily activities. Subjects also filled out logs at home in which they narrated the "who, what, and where" of their interactions, and wrote essays describing their relationships to others who seemed particularly significant to them. In the second month of the study, 13 role identities were selected on the basis of the interviews and logs as being prevalent roles in the social situations and relationships in which the subjects repeatedly found themselves: athlete, employee, same-sex friend, opposite-sex friend, romantic partner, religious participant, roommate, son or daughter, student, hobbyist, musician, artist, and politician.

Commitment. Two approaches were employed to measure commitment to role identities. One approach involved the rank ordering of role identities along a dimension of importance, where the least important identity was defined as the one the subject would give up first, if required to do so, and the most important was the one he or she would sacrifice last. The other approach was a Commitment Index consisting of 31 true-false items. The instructions with the items ask the subject to mentally fill in the blank (see below) with the role identity under investigation, e.g., student. The items fall into eight different categories: the relationships between identity and emotions (e.g., "I would feel a great sense of loss if suddenly I were unable to be or strive to be a _____"), decision-making (e.g., "During the past week, I have made only a few decisions-fewer than three-in which my being a _____ has influenced the decision process"), object choice (e.g., "If I had to give up something, being a _____ is one of the first things I would give up"), social comparison (e.g., "If everyone were better at being a _____, it would make no difference to me"), long-range plans (e.g., "In 1 or 2 years, I would still like to be a _____"), self-presentation (e.g., "When I identify myself to new people, I often tell them I am a _____"), use of time, care, and effort (e.g., "If I run across an article related to being a _____, I usually read it with interest"), and anxiety (e.g., "Compared to other concerns, I worry a lot about being a good _____").

Goals. Subjects were asked to consider each of approximately 15 situations in which their various role identities could potentially be ex-

pressed (e.g., athletic events, being at a movie, going on a date). For each situation, subjects described what they were like, what they wanted to accomplish, and how they wanted others to see them. Responses suggested that subjects could indeed differentiate among the situations, since they reported situationally specific behaviors and differential aspirations for self-presentation. The importance of the situation to the subjects affected the specificity with which they reported their self-presentational goals. In important situations, subjects were quite detailed in indicating how they wished to be identified, typically mentioning several identity goals that were important to them.

In order to systematize subjects' reports of the way they wished to be known in different situations—their identity goals—we developed a goal check list by systematically sampling one third of Anderson's (1968) 555 personality trait words and one third of Averill's (1975) list of emotional concepts with 100% familiarity. A list of 250 self-descriptive items was constructed. Subjects were asked to check all those items that indicated positive (section 1) and negative (section 2) identity-specific goals: "What do you (NOT) want to be like as a _____"; a particular role identity was entered in the blank. After checking, subjects circled all those checked items most important and then ranked the circled items from most to least important. The three subjects responded to the Identity Goal Checklist for a subset of seven role identities, indicating both positive and negative goals.

Expectations. In order to measure identity expectations, three role identities were chosen for each subject, who was interviewed to obtain behaviors and concerns relevant to the enactment of each identity. For example, subjects were asked how they knew when they were approaching or achieving their identity goals and what kinds of behavior hindered goal achievement. That is, they were asked "How do you know if you are being _____?" and "What are some things you know you shouldn't do if you are to be _____," where the blanks were filled in with important goals (e.g., sympathetic) relevant to the role identities under examination. In addition, subjects wrote essay responses to the questions: "What is it essential for you (to do) (not to do) in order for you to be _____?"

For each subject, three unique sets of behaviors and concerns were developed—one for each of the subject's three role identities to be studied in depth. Sets consisted of 23 to 36 behaviors, with the subject's own wording retained as much as possible. For example, behaviors relevant to subject 1's enactment of the student role identity included "budgeting my time for the day" and "skipping classes." For subject 2, behaviors relevant to the identity of romantic partner included such items as "I talk about trivial things."

Expectations that the subjects held for the behaviors they associated with their role identities and goals were measured using Jackson's (1966)

model, which conceptualizes expectations as evaluative beliefs (proscriptions and prescriptions) about the performance of specified behaviors and operationalizes them as reports of approval-disapproval. For each role identity separately, subjects indicated their expectations for relevant behaviors obtained as described above. For each behavior, the subjects indicated how strongly they would approve or disapprove of behaving that way themselves, for each of five frequency levels. For example, subject 1 indicated her expectations about "budgeting my time for the day" by selecting a point on a scale from 1 (strongly disapprove) through 5 (don't really care one way or another) to 9 (strongly approve) for five frequency levels:

Given the chance, never (0 times out of 5).

Given the chance, seldom (1 time out of 5).

Given the chance, sometimes (2 or 3 times out of 5).

Given the chance, often (4 times out of 5).

Given the chance, always (5 times out of 5).

The strength or *intensity* of expectation is calculated as the mean of the absolute discrepancies of the subject's responses from the point of indifference (5). Intensity ranges from 0.0 to 4.0 (Jackson, 1975).

Procedure

Having developed procedures for systematically observing identity variables, the last 11 weeks of the research period were devoted to systematically gathering data. Measures of the variables described above were taken once every 2 weeks for a total of five measures over time, with the exception of identities, which were ranked weekly.

In addition, 55 introductory psychology students volunteered to participate in an identity survey in exchange for bonus points toward their course grade. Upon arrival to the research room, each subject was given a booklet containing four sections. In section 1, subjects were asked to consider eight role identities, each of which was defined for them: athlete, employee, same-sex friend, religious participant, romantic partner, son or daughter, and student. After they were given a few moments to consider each identity and how it fit into their lives, students ranked the eight identities from most to least important. In sections 2 and 3 of the booklet, subjects first responded to the Identity Commitment items and then to the Identity Goal Checklist for those identities which they ranked as first and fifth most important in section 1. (The checklist data are not reported in this paper.) Section 4 of the booklet asked subjects for biographical information, such as their attendance at religious meetings.

RESULTS

Validity

Subjects in the cross-sectional sample rank-ordered the importance of eight role identities and then responded to the Identity Commitment Index twice: once for the role identity they ranked first in importance and once for the one they ranked fifth. A modest demonstration of the convergent validity of the rank order and the Index measures of commitment would result if, on the average, the scores on the Identity Commitment Index were higher for the first-ranked identities than for the fifth-ranked ones.

The mean was greater for the first-ranked ($M = 24.6$) than for the fifth-ranked ($M = 18.7$) identities, $t(54) = 6.64$, $p < .001$, two-tailed paired scores test. The relatively high mean for the fifth-ranked identity suggests that, on the average, these students were committed to those identities above the sixth rank of importance. Alternatively, this finding could indicate that some of these 31 items in the index are insensitive to differences in commitment.

The index was analyzed for each item by computing the percentages of subjects in the top and bottom thirds of the distribution of total scores who answered in a procommitment direction. The difference within each pair of percentages, or D score (Anastasi, 1968), reflects the extent to which each item contributes to the differentiation of high from low scorers on the total index. An item analysis was performed separately on the commitment scores for the first- and fifth-ranked identities.

Twenty-two items were found to discriminate ($D > 40\%$) high from low scorers on their first- or their fifth-ranked identities. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the scores derived from these 22 items on the first- and fifth-ranked identities: .73 and .81, respectively. The lower alpha for the first-ranked identity scores might reflect their attenuated range due to the fact that most subjects felt quite committed to their first-ranked identity ($M = 16.3$, $SD = 3.5$) compared to their fifth-ranked identity ($M = 10.9$, $SD = 4.6$). The difference between the two means was significant, $t(54) = 7.05$, $p < .001$, two-tailed paired scores test. The mean for the fifth-ranked identities suggests that, on the average, subjects were moderately committed.

A number of biographical questions had been asked of the cross-sectional subjects. The criterion validity of the identity rankings and ratings would be bolstered if they were found to be meaningfully related to autobiographical reports. Table I summarizes the associations between these reports and commitment to the eight identities, as measured by the rankings

Table I. Associations (Tau) between Two Measures of Commitment and Subjects' Reports of Biographical Information

Identity	Biographical report	Association with ranka	Association with Index
Athlete	Sex (male = 2; female = 1)	.26 ^c (52)	.38(6)
	Sports participation	.46d (51)	.56(6)
Employee	Year in school	.13 (52)	.82b (5)
Same-sex friend	Campus residence (on = 2; off= 1)	.22c (52)	.29 (16)
Religious	Religious participation	.29c (52)	.32b (20)
	Prayer	.46d (50)	.57d (20)
Romantic partner	Steady (yes = 1; no = 0)	.28c (52)	-.07(12)
	Dates	.35d (51)	-.13 (14)
Roommate	Year in school	-.08(52)	-.49(6)
Child	Sex (male = 2; female = 1)	-.26c (52)	-.37 b (17)
Student	Credits	.14 (50)	-.27b (22)
	Missed classes	.18b(52)	-.35b(21)

a Ranks were rescored, so that low rank numbers would reflect low importance.

b_y < .05.

c_p < .01.

d_p < .001.

and the 22-item Commitment Index. Since the Index scores are available only for those identities that subjects ranked first or fifth, the numbers of respondents are different for each of the reported Identity statistics. Commitment to an athletic identity is stronger for males; also, the more committed, the more time spent participating in sports. Similarly, participation in religious activities and prayer is consistently related to religious commitment on both measures. Females are more committed to identifying themselves as daughters than are males to their son identity. Same-sex friendships are more important to students living in close contact with each other on campus than they are to students living off-campus. Commitment to a romantic partner identity is associated with having a particular romantic partner and with dating, at least on the rank-order measure of commitment. For older students (upper classes), commitment to the roommate identity is lower and commitment to the employee identity is higher, in comparison to younger students, although this finding is based on only a few subjects. The picture for the student identity is unclear, since the measures suggest that committed subjects may or may not take more credits and miss more classes.

Distribution of Identities

The cross-sectional subjects, on the average, tended to rank some identities more highly than others. The frequency distribution of subjects by

Table II. Distribution of Subjects across the Eight Identities and Ranks

Identity	Identity ranked								Median rank
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	
Athlete	1	2	2	5	5	8	15	17	6.8
Employee	2	3	2	2	3	8	20	15	6.9
Friend	6	9	14	10	11	4	1	0	3.4
Religious	10	8	6	7	10	5	5	4	4.0
Romantic	8	10	7	8	6	11	4	1	3.8
Roommate	0	1	2	9	10	14	4	15	5.9
Child	14	14	11	7	3	3	2	1	2.5
Student	14	8	11	7	7	2	4	2	3.0

identity rank and category is given in Table 11. These students typically ranked their athletic and employee identities relatively low ($Mdn = 6.8$ and 6.9 , respectively), and ranked their son or daughter and student identities relatively high ($Mdn = 2.5$ and 3.0 , respectively).

Stability of Identity Rankings

The three longitudinal subjects had rank-ordered the importance of 13 identities each week. Stability of each subject's ranking was assessed by computing the tau between the first and eleventh week's rankings of these role identities. Tau was .69 for subject 1, .85 for subject 2, and .79 for subject 3. A finer-grained analysis involves computing tau between the rankings for each pair of sequential weeks, i.e., between weeks 1 and 2, 2 and 3, 3 and 4, etc. For subject 1, these taus ranged from .36 to .85, with the median of the 12 taus equal to .64. For subject 2, the range was from .90 to 1.0, with a median of .97. For subject 3, the range was from .79 to .97, with a median of .91.

Goals and Expectations

During the first of the 11-week period, the interviewer discerned through discussions with the longitudinal subjects approximately 100 behaviors related to the goals the subject held for each of three (of the 13) identities. On alternate weeks, the subjects indicated the intensity of their expectations for these behaviors and responded to the Identity Goal Checklist. For each identity, a subject selected five behaviors especially relevant to each of two or three important goals (i.e., goals which were frequently mentioned and highly ranked during the 11-week period). Since some of the behaviors were selected as relevant to more than one goal, the number of different behaviors associated with each identity ranged from 8 through 11.

Table III. Identity Commitment and Intensity of Expectations for Relevant Behaviors

Identity	Time					Mean Commitment Index	Mean intensity
	1	2	3	4	5		
Subject 1							
Student	15a (3.0)b	21 (2.7)	20(2.9)	14 (2.5)	10 (2.1)	16.0	2.63
Opposite-sex friend	13 (2.5)	19(2.8)	8(2.6)	17(2.9)	16(3.0)	14.6	2.74
Same-sex friend	19 (2.5)	11 (2.4)	8(2.6)	16 (2.3)	15 (2.3)	13.8	2.40
Subject 2							
Romantic partner	18(1.5)	17 (1.6)	19 (1.7)	17 (1.4)	16 (1.4)	17.4	1.49
Same-sex friend	16(1.4)	16 (1.7)	16 (1.5)	14(1.8)	18(1.6)	16.0	1.60
Athlete	15 (1.4)	15 (1.3)	16(1.1)	16(1.4)	14 (1.3)	15.2	1.30
Subject 3							
Student	12(2.9)	12(2.4)	11 (2.2)	15 (2.8)	13 (2.4)	12.6	2.54
Romantic partner	8 (1.3)	10(1.6)	8(1.3)	10(2.0)	8(2.6)	8.8	1.77
Same-sex friend	11(2.0)	5 (1.3)	4(1.7)	5 (2.3)	6 (1.0)	6.2	1.68

aIdentity Commitment Index score (22 item index).

bIntensity of expectations for behaviors relevant to identity goals.

We had hypothesized that commitment to an identity and intensity of expectations would be associated. Table III displays, for each identity and each alternate week, subjects' Identity Commitment Index scores and the intensity of expectations for behaviors especially relevant to goals associated with the identities. For each subject, the identity with the lowest mean Index score is associated with the weakest intensity of expectations: 2.40, 1.30, and 1.68, for subjects I through 3, respectively. However, in general, at any point in time, or on the average across time periods, the within-subject commitment levels tend to be quite similar for at least two of the three identities. Thus, it is difficult to assess the hypothesized relationship between commitment and strength of expectation, since the reliability of the Commitment Index probably decreases in proportion to the fineness of the discriminations it is asked to make.

Nevertheless, the data do suggest covariation between commitment and intensity. Differences between commitment scores are associated with direct monotonic differences in intensity scores, especially when the commitment scores are substantially discrepant. This relationship between commitment and intensity holds in two senses. First, comparisons across time reveal that generally, as commitment substantially increases or decreases, there is a similar change in intensity. For example, comparing time 1 with time 5, for seven of the nine identities, change in commitment is associated with a direct correlated change in intensity. In one of the two deviant cases, there was no change in commitment, and in the other, there was a change in commitment of only one unit. Comparisons between other pairs of time periods also yield modest support for the commitment-intensity hypothesis. Second, comparisons across the subject's identity commitments within a given time period suggest a monotonic relationship between commitment and intensity. For example, subject 3 at time 1 has a hierarchy of Identity Commitment scores (12, 11, and 8) that corresponds monotonically to the associated intensity scores (2.9, 2.0, and 1.3). This relationship holds for each subject at each point in time, with some slight inversions in a few instances.

DISCUSSION

In summary, our findings indicate the convergence of two measures of commitment to role identities, with commitment to an identity being related meaningfully to self-reports of social activity, such as church attendance and athletic participation. These students typically were most committed to identifying themselves as sons or daughters, next most committed to various peer identities, and least to athletic and employee identities.

Further, identity commitment was shown to be stable over time, although the degree of stability differed by subject. Finally, there was support for the hypothesis that identity commitment is translated into intensity of expectations for behaviors relevant to identity goals.

Gough (1976) is correct in stressing the need for new theorizing about personality functioning. The research reported here was an initial attempt to improve the current state of conceptualizing and operationalizing personality as a self-system. Further research is underway currently to provide cross- and convergent validation of the measure of commitment, and to elaborate the conceptualization presented in this paper, which now turns to a discussion of three additional issues centrally implicated in personality theorizing and fruitfully dealt with by a model of self-systemic functioning.

Cross-Situational Consistency

The issue of consistency is a concern for psychologists because of their belief that consistency across situations would be compelling evidence for the force of personality on behavior. This belief is founded on the trait model of personality, in which stable dispositions are released in situations, a model plagued by certain problems. First, in an attempt to provide evidence for cross-situational consistency, researchers have mistakenly offered nomothetic correlations to the exclusion of evidence for idiographic stability, a fact well-recognized now. Second, in assessing the relationships between genotypic dispositions and phenotypic manifestations of those dispositions, researchers have imposed their own equivalence classes on subjects, assuming a consensus of interpretation of behaviors that doesn't exist, either between subjects and researcher, or among subjects (Bem & Allen, 1974).

A self-theoretical approach suggests that cross-situational consistency is not the sine qua non of personality. Rather, one will monitor and attempt to control (Snyder, 1974) those behaviors that he or she interprets as relevant to self-concept (Bem, 1972), or more exactly, to those self-identifications to which the person is committed. Consistency is the outcome of this self-controlling process (in addition to other contributing factors). What is crucial to the acting person is consistency between identity goals and relevant behaviors. Whether or not there is cross-situational consistency is a function of the way one identifies oneself in those situations, and not definitive evidence for or against the effect of personality on behavior. The extent of a person's consistency is not a trait phenomenon, but rather is rooted in the fact that people intend to produce classes of behavior as expressions of their identity commitments.

Behavior is not consistent in an absolute sense; it is consistent relative to the person's identity. For example, a person who is highly committed to a religious identity will tend to seek out situations in which to express behaviors relevant to that identity, as well as to attend to cues in any situation that will allow the appropriate display of religious behaviors, acts which the person interprets as reflecting an exemplary performance of the religious role.

Personality Development

Personality develops as the individual is socialized into ways of identifying self to others. This socialization process continues throughout our lives (Brim & Wheeler, 1967), with various contextual conditions modifying the ways we announce who we are to others.

One's self-identification is modified and new identities assumed partly because of the desirability one associates with ways of identifying oneself (Alexander & Knight, 1971). Children and adults alike, finding themselves in new situations or circumstances (e.g., first day of school, first date, first marriage), must decide how they want to be known to others in those situations. People socialize each other by asking such questions as: "what are you doing?"; "why are you being like that?" Answers and attempts at justification and accounts (Scott & Lyman, 1968) shape a person's identity and future behavior. For example, if a person and others come to regard the person as clumsy, that identification will undermine the person's resistance to subsequent events about which a "clumsy person can't do anything." The ways one identifies oneself affect what one is willing to try to control: A person socialized to be identified as a physician learns to save lives; one socialized into a role of mechanical engineer does not.

The same argument holds for socialization into gender identity or "sex role." The way one presents oneself sexually in situations appears to be learned early in life, although clearly this identification of one's gender is elaborated throughout life in many situations (Stoll, 1974). Gender involves identifying oneself to others and to self along dimensions of masculinity and femininity. These dimensions have increasingly been interpreted by some researchers as independent: A person may present a gender that is predominately androgynous, masculine, feminine, or neither (Heilbrun, 1976). The way one announces gender identity may depend to some extent on the situation and the audience, or gender may be, as commonly assumed, constant across situations. In either case, gender identity exerts a constraining and directing force on a person's behavior (Bem, 1975), in the same way that other identities do when one is committed to them.

Adaptability

Allport's definition of personality refers to the person's adjustment to the environment. The social learning theorist emphasizes the adaptability of the person, stressing the modifiability of behavior. In contrast, the conception of personality described here in one sense stresses the resistance the person can offer to contextual forces (Prus, 1975). Persons organize their behavior in terms of their commitments: The young boy fights those who would call him a sissy; the Christian overcomes temptation; the political activist is inoculated against counterattitudinal persuasion.

In some instances, commitments to self-identifications may reduce one's adaptability in settings characterized by values and demands that are incompatible with those which one makes on oneself (Zurcher, Meadow, & Zurcher, 1965). There is evidence, for example, that strong gender commitments reduce adaptability in settings that impose tasks incongruent with the person's "sex role" (Bem, 1975). People perform less effectively when an aspect of their self-identification is incongruent with the demands of the role they are enacting (e.g., Smelser, 1961).

True, people attend to situational cues by which they can guide their behavior in a fashion that is appropriate to a particular setting, but they differ individually in this characteristic (Snyder, 1974). One thrust of the present paper is that people not only adjust their behavior to comply with others' standards and expectations, but also to comply with their own. The important research question is how a person combines the process of self- and other-reference into an integrated, smooth career across the wide range of settings and audiences that he or she encounters.

Identity commitments that run counter to situational demands may generate behaviors inappropriate to the situation (e.g., deviance). For example, the Asch experiment has been interpreted as one which contains strong implications for the subjects' identities in that situation. "To the subject, the correct judgment appeared so obvious that only perceptual incompetents, fools, or madmen could err [A]t best, his dissent promised to be as incomprehensible to his peers as their current judgments were to him" (Ross, Bierbrauer, & Hoffman, 1976). A subject is likely to resist the implicit demands to agree with others' judgments to the degree the person is committed to identities other than that of peer, and indeed this is what the evidence suggests (Toder & Marcia, 1973).

Identity commitments are less likely to produce resistance to (incompatible) demands from others under a number of circumstances: when the others' norms are powerful (Jackson, 1975); when surveillance is close; when sanctions are present; when the others are active in the socialization and communication process; and when the actor is attracted to the others, i.e., is attached to them in a positive relationship.

In this discussion we have attempted to illustrate some of the conceptual advantages of the self-systemic approach to personality issues of current interest. What this paper has not done, nor attempted to do, is to delineate a broader perspective on human activity, encompassing not only personality's effect on behavior, but also the consequences of situational forces on the direction and intensity of a person's activities. One advantage of the conceptualization offered in this paper is that it readily allows the development of a model of interaction that does include both personal and social forces.

REFERENCES

- ALEXANDER, C. N., JR., & KNIGHT, G. W. Situated identities and social psychological experimentation. *Sociometry*, 1971, 34, 65-82.
- ALLPORT, G. W. *Personality: A psychological interpretation*. New York: Holt, 1937.
- ALLPORT, G. W. The open system in personality theory. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1960, 61, 301-311.
- ANASTASI, A. *Psychological testing*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.
- ANDERSON, N. H. Likableness ratings of 555 personality trait words. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1968, 9, 272-279.
- AVERILL, J. R. A semantic atlas of emotional concepts. *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 1975, 5, 330. (Ms. No. 1103)
- BEM, D. J. Constructing cross-situational consistencies in behavior: Some thoughts on Alker's critique of Mischel. *Journal of Personality*, 1972, 40, 17-26.
- BEM, D. J., & ALLEN, A. On predicting some of the people some of the time: The search for cross-situational consistencies in behavior. *Psychological Review*, 1974, 81, 506-520.
- BEM, S. L. Sex role adaptability: One consequence of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1975, 31, 634-643.
- BLUMSTEIN, P. W. Audience, Machiavellianism, and tactics of identity bargaining. *Sociometry*, 1973, 36, 346-363.
- BOWERS, K. S. Situationism in psychology: An analysis and a critique. *Psychological Review*, 1973, 80, 307-335.
- BRIM, O. C., JR., & WHEELER, S. *Socialization after childhood: Two essays*. New York: Wiley, 1967.
- BUCKLEY, W. *Sociology and modern systems theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- FEATHER, N. T. *Values in education and society*. New York: Free Press, 1975.
- GOUGH, H. G. Personality and personality assessment. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976.
- HEILBRUN, A. B., JR. Measurement of masculine and feminine sex role identities as independent dimensions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 1976, 44, 183-190.
- JACKSON, J. M. A conceptual and measurement model for norms and roles. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 1966, 9, 35-47.
- JACKSON, J. M. Normative power and conflict potential. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 1975, 4, 237-264.
- KLINGER, E. *Meaning and void: Inner experience and the incentives in people's lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- KUHN, M. H., & MCPARTLAND, T. S. An empirical investigation of self-attitudes. *American Sociological Review*, 1954, 19, 68-76.
- MCCALL, G. J., & SIMMONS, J. L. *Identities and interactions*. New York: Free Press, 1966.

- MILLER, D. R. The personality as a system. In R. Naroll & R. Cohen (Eds.), *A handbook of method in cultural anthropology*. Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1970.
- MILLS, C. W. Situated actions and vocabularies of motive. *American Sociological Review*, 1940, 5, 904-913.
- MISCHEL, W. *Personality and assessment*. New York: Wiley, 1968.
- PARSONS, T. The position of identity in the general theory of action. In C. Gordon & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), *The self in social interaction (Vol. 1)*. New York: Wiley, 1968.
- PRUS, R. C. Resisting designations: An extension of attribution theory into a negotiated context. *Sociological Inquiry*, 1975, 45, 3-14.
- ROSS, L., BIERBRAUER, G., & HOFFMAN, S. The role of attribution processes in conformity and dissent: Revisiting the Asch situation. *American Psychologist*, 1976, 31, 148-157.
- SCOTT, M. B., & LYMAN, S. M. Accounts. *American Sociological Review*, 1968, 33, 47-62.
- SMELSER, W. T. Dominance as a factor in achievement and perception in cooperative problem solving interactions. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1961, 62, 535-541.
- SNYDER, M. Self-monitoring of expressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1974, 30, 526-537.
- STOLL, C. S. *Female and male: Socialization, social roles, and social structure*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1974.
- STRAUSS, A. *Mirrors and masks: The search for identity*. New York: Free Press, 1959.
- STRYKER, S. Identity salience and role performance: The relevance of symbolic interaction theory for family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1968, 30, 558-564.
- TODER, N. L., & MARCIA, J. E. Ego identity status and response to conformity pressure in college women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1973, 26, 287-294.
- WACHTEL, P. L. Psychodynamics, behavior therapy, and the implacable experimenter: An inquiry into the consistency of personality. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1973, 82, 324-334.
- WYLIE, R. C. *The self-concept: A review of methodological considerations and measuring instruments* (Rev. ed., Vol. 1). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974.
- ZURCHER, L. A., JR., MEADOW, A., & ZURCHER, S. L. Value orientation, role conflict, and alienation from work: A cross-cultural study. *American Sociological Review*, 1965, 30, 539-548.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

RICHARD T. SANTEE is a Lecturer in Social Science at the University of California at Berkeley. He received his BA from the University of California, Berkeley, and his MA and PhD in sociology from the University of Oregon. His research includes studies of interpersonal attraction and evaluation, and self and role theories.

SUSAN E. JACKSON received her BA in psychology from the University of Minnesota and is currently a social psychology student in the doctoral program at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include goal-setting and self-evaluation.