Title
Examining the Social Context in Identity Theory

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8nd0t970

Author
Carter, Michael J.

Publication Date
2010

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
Examining the Social Context in Identity Theory

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Michael James Carter

June 2010

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Jan E. Stets, Chairperson
Dr. Peter J. Burke
Dr. Jonathan H. Turner
The Dissertation of Michael James Carter is approved:

________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside
I first wish to acknowledge the following undergraduate students who worked as research assistants for me during the data collection for this dissertation: Felicia Garver, Alan Hong, Alicia Jimenez, Evelyn Liaw, Rene Mares, Alfred (A.J.) McCloud, Juanita Price, Malvie Quezada, Marco Santiani, Aimee Tokin, Lisa Wong, and Nicole Yu. These students were essential at the early stages of my research.

Extra special thanks to my head undergraduate research assistant Athanasia Medenas for her countless hours of assistance during turbulent times in the laboratory, and for always lifting my spirits when the data collection road became bumpy.

I also wish to thank my cohorts and fellow teaching assistants/associates for their friendship and support throughout my time at the University of California, Riverside: Anders Carlson, Michael Chavez, Gary Coyne, April Cubbage-Vega, Stephanie D’Auria, Jesse Drucker, Matt Grindal, Aikaterini Glyniadaki, Erika Gutierrez, Matt Kaneshiro, Tracey Hoover, Brooke Johnson, Tony Juge, Jae-Woo Kim, Linda Kim, Ashley Koda, Cory LePage, Shoon Lio, Jose Lopez, Sandra Barboza Loughrin, Kate Luther, Diana MacDougall, Linda McAnnally, David McCanna, Kerry Mulligan, Lisa Fahres Murphy, Scott Murphy, Annebelle Nery, Joanna Norton, Dolores Ortiz, Christine Petit, Matt Rotondi, Preeta Saxena, Jennifer Simmers, Amanda Spears, Julio Tsuha, Louis Tuthill, Theresa Ubovich, Frances Vu, Jake Wilson, and Michelle Ysais.

I would like to thank my “official” graduate student mentor Dr. Christopher Schmitt, who was very helpful and always willing to spend time with me.
Very special thanks to Dr. Michael M. Harrod for all his mentorship and friendship during my early years at UC Riverside—I could not have collected the data used in this dissertation without him teaching me the Ci3 computer program, which he did both graciously and patiently.

To my close cohorts in social psychology who have shared this journey with me: Dr. Emily O’Neill Asencio, Allison Cantwell, Dr. Christine Cerven, Shelley Osborn, and Yvonne Thai—you all have been an integral part of my development as a sociologist and have all been special friends to me as well.

Extra special thanks to Jesse Fletcher for his invaluable assistance in creating the research design for this dissertation, and also for being a great friend throughout my data collection.

To Kristopher Proctor and Richard Niemeyer: thanks for all the great conversations and for always maintaining the highest standards, and for tossing diplomacy aside when it needed to be abandoned.

I also wish to acknowledge the following professors at UC Riverside, without whom I would not have had nearly as an enriching experience as I did: Dr. Adalberto Aguirre Jr., Dr. Steven G. Brint, Dr. Scott L. Coltrane, Dr. Robert A. Hanneman, Dr. Masako Ishii-Kuntz, Dr. Augustine Kposowa, Dr. Alexandra Maryanski, Dr. Robert Nash Parker, Dr. Raymond L. Russell III, and Dr. Charles Whitney.

I would like to acknowledge the professors who sat on both my MA thesis and Ph.D. dissertation committee at UC Riverside: Chair, Dr. Jan E. Stets, Dr. Peter J. Burke, and
Dr. Jonathan H. Turner. These three professors have been integral in my development as a sociologist and I am forever indebted to them for their guidance.

Very special thanks to Management Service Officer Cathy Carlson and Graduate Affairs Assistant Anna Wire. Their guidance, dependability, and smiling faces made navigating the Ph.D. program palatable.

I also wish to acknowledge my good friends and cohorts Dr. Seth Abrutyn and Kirk Lawrence: you two have added immeasurably to my experience at the university.

Lastly, I would like to give a very special acknowledgement to my parents, Steven and Janice Carter, and to my wife Rachel Carter. Their support has been unparalleled.

The research for this dissertation was funded by a doctoral dissertation research improvement grant from the National Science Foundation (Award SES#0726078). Special thanks to Professor Jan E. Stets, the principle investigator on this grant, for her assistance in securing the funding and for her mentorship throughout my time at UC Riverside.
DEDICATION

For Rachel Carter
Examine the Social Context in Identity Theory

by

Michael James Carter

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, June 2010
Dr. Jan E. Stets, Chairperson

This study advances identity theory, a prominent sociological social psychological theory, by investigating how the moral identity, moral behavior, and emotions operate in different social contexts, specifically when the moral identity is activated (or not activated) and when individuals are alone or in different types of groups. This extends identity theory by including key processes in social identity theory (identity activation and group membership) which have not been examined in the existing literature concerning the control systems approach to identity. A survey and experiment are administered to examine how the moral identity process operates for individuals in different social contexts. The survey measures individuals’ moral identities. In the experiment, subjects are placed in a situation where they have an opportunity to behave immorally to gain an advantage over others. Results show that both the moral identity and group membership predict moral behavior in a situation. Direct activation of the moral identity is not required for it to influence moral behavior, which supports the moral
identity as a principle-level identity. Implications of the study findings and recommendations for future research are discussed.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Introduction 1

  Identity and Social Context 2

  Identity Activation and Group Membership 13

  The Benefit of Understanding Contextual Factors in Identity Theory 18

Chapter 2. Theory and Hypotheses 25

  Past Research in Identity Theory Regarding the Moral Identity 29

    Linking the Moral Identity Standard to Behavior and Emotions 30

    The Moral Identity and Race, Gender, and Religion 31

    Moral Identity, Status, Moral Emotions, and the Normative Order 33

  Incorporating Social Identity Theory 36

  Study Hypotheses 39

    The Moral Identity 39

    Identity Activation 40

    Group Membership 41

    Group Pressure 45

    Emotions 47

Chapter 3. Literature Review 48

  Review of the Classical Scholarship on Morality 48

    Early Sociological Theorizing on Morality 52

  Contemporary Scholarship on Morality across the Disciplines 57
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Principle Components Factor Analysis for Moral Identity 97
Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Variables 116
Table 3. Correlations among Variables 117
Table 4. Behavior by Laboratory Condition 118
Table 5. Logistic Regression of Behavior by Moral Identity and Social Context 120
Table 6. Logistic Regression of Behavior by Moral Identity, Moral Identity Activation, and Social Context 121
Table 7. Logistic Regression of Moral Identity and Group Condition Interactions 122
Table 8. OLS Regression Emotions T2 123
Table 9. OLS Regression Emotions T2 without Controlling for Emotions T1 128
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Control Systems Identity Model 27

Figure 2. Histogram of Moral Identity Scores 119
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This doctoral dissertation advances identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009) by addressing whether the identity process operates the same way irrespective of the social context within which individuals are embedded, and whether identities require direct activation for them to influence behavior. Focusing on the social context develops identity theory beyond its current boundaries. Apart from a few research projects which have examined facets of social context as they pertain to identity (Burke and Franzoi 1988; Deaux and Martin 2003; Serpe 1987; Serpe and Stryker 1987; Stryker and Serpe 1982), there is a relative dearth of theoretical and empirical work that addresses the role social context plays in the identity process. Those that have attempted to examine how social context affects identity processes have not examined how the identity verification processes operates when people are alone compared to when they are with others. It is implicit in identity theory that identity non-verification results from disturbances in one’s environment, but to this point research has not systematically examined how such disturbances operate for an identity when the identity is invoked in different social settings. Examining identity activation furthers understanding of whether some types of identities require direct activation to influence behavior, or if specific types of identities are always active and influential across social contexts.

In this dissertation, I seek to compare how the moral identity influences behavior and emotions when individuals are alone, in a group, or in a group where other group members pressure an individual to behave immorally. I administer a two-part study (a
survey and a laboratory experiment) and apply identity theory and social identity theory to discover the following:

1. Does the moral identity operate to influence moral behavior when an individual is in a situation where they can choose to behave immorally to gain an advantage over others?

2. Does the moral identity operate to influence moral behavior in the same way when one is alone compared to when one is part of a group (where the immoral action benefits either the sole actor or all members of the group)?

3. Does being in a group where members pressure an individual to behave immorally mitigate the moral identity process, i.e. is one more likely to conform to group demands or follow the meanings of their moral identity?

4. Does the moral identity (a principle-level identity which operates like a master identity) require direct activation to influence behavior, or is it perpetually active to influence behavior?

5. Does a discrepancy between the moral identity and an individual’s behavior result in negative emotions as predicted by identity theory, and does this differ depending on the social context of being alone, or being part of a group?

**Identity and Social Context**

Research that has considered the impact of social context on identity has examined how different elements of the environment shape subjective definitions of the self, self-evaluations, and interactions with others (Deaux and Martin 2003), or how individuals

---

1 The moral identity and principle-level identities are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
select specific types of identities in a situation (Burke and Franzoi 1988). Deaux and Martin revealed how social categories that define someone (such as occupation or nationality) and one’s interpersonal network each play a unique role in the identity process. They developed an integrative model of “identity in context” which recognizes that identity processes operate among two distinct contexts: A cognitive/representational context which is shaped by categorical membership (such as one’s ethnicity or religion), and an interpersonal context regarding specific reciprocal relationships with others. For example, they examined how Hispanic students defined their ethnic identity during their first year at an Ivy League university, finding that social context was related to the strength of ethnic identification (i.e. a more extensive cultural network, the stronger one’s Hispanic identity).

This work sought to synthesize existing theories of identity (identity theory, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory) for a more complete understanding of the self. I attempt such a synthesis as well in this dissertation by incorporating the control systems approach to identity theory and social identity theory, but I employ identity theory to examine identity verification and social identity theory to examine group membership and identity activation. Deaux and Martin’s effort to incorporate theories of identity is important as it highlights multiple areas of the identity process which together influence social action (such as identity commitment and social categorization of others). By using a multiple-theory approach, they are able to explain better how and why identities influence people to behave as they do. I follow in this tradition; by using

2 Deaux and Martin did not create an integrated theory; they rather utilized multiple theories to explain different social processes (which I do as well in this dissertation).
identity theory and social identity theory together in this dissertation I am able to understand both how actors seek to verify who they are as well as how they act while with others in the social context. While identity theory subsumes social identity theory, I use both theories here to highlight the basic processes in which I examine (specifically identity activation, group membership, and identity verification).

Burke and Franzoi (1988) examined how particular meanings of an identity are selected in a situation by employing a experiential sampling methodology. Participants in a study carried an electronic timer for two days while they went about their normal routines. Periodically the timer would signal the participant to stop their normal routine in order to answer a questionnaire regarding their social context at the time, measuring things such as who they were with, what they were doing, what identities they were playing out at the time, and their perceptions of themselves in the situation. Burke and Franzoi found that the manner in which people view themselves depends on the how a person defines the situation they find themselves in. They also discovered that behavior is a function of how one views themselves in a situation. This work provides begins to show how social context influences the identity process, but work in identity theory on the subject has been relatively scarce since.

Other work on social context as it pertains to identity is found in Serpe’s (Serpe 1987) research which examined identity stability and identity change. Serpe discovered how identities change regarding the social structural contexts in which they are embedded by addressing a key question concerning all theories of self and identity: is the self stable and invariant across settings, or is the self flexible and changeable depending on social
context? He posited that situational meanings can decrease an identity’s position in the salience hierarchy (representing an identity’s relative position in one’s overall hierarchy of identities) when barriers in a situation constrain the type of identity that can be enacted. Serpe discovered this by examining college freshman and the impact their new surroundings had on their identity processes as first time university students. His research examined the conditions that promote change, and in what types of situations one’s identities remain stable. Findings revealed that the nature of one’s interactions in their structural surrounding affect the formation of one’s identity salience hierarchy. For example, Serpe found that students’ identities were more likely to change (i.e. become higher in the salience hierarchy) in “open” social structural contexts. Open social structures provide more opportunities for an identity to be invoked. For example, the social structure that exists in a college dormitory offers many opportunities for one to play out a student identity, and it is an open social structural context. The more opportunities one had to play out an identity in the social structure, the more likely an identity would be invoked across situations, and the higher the identity became in the salience hierarchy.

Following the work that showed how identities are affected by social structural conditions, Serpe also showed how some social structural arrangements offer more opportunities to play out an identity than do others. If a person is constrained by situational factors, they may not have the opportunity to play out a role that supports an identity. For example, one’s behavioral opportunities are quite limited in prison, and one does not have the avenues of choices in which to play out different types of behavior. It is
here that one can see why context is important to consider for the identity process.
Elements outside the self that promote or hinder identity verification must be considered for the theory to continue to be predictive as a general sociological theory.

Serpe also found that identity theory is strongest in predicting behavior in situations where multiple avenues of choice are possible; it is here when different opportunities arise that one’s identity influences behavior. When actors make choices or pursue lines of action, the process raises the salience of the identity in the overall salience hierarchy, hence making behaviors aligned with the identity more likely to be enacted in the future. For example, Serpe found that the “athletic” identity was highly salient for the students in his sample because of wide variety of choices that define the identity: the athletic identity can be developed by participating in many different types of activities, allowing one to develop a high level of affective and interactional commitment to the identity by interacting with others also involved in the activity. The past work by Stryker, Serpe, and others opened the door for others to continue research on social context and identity, but recent developments in this area have not been prevalent.

There has been some attention to contextual factors in the control systems approach to identity theory (Burke and Stets 2009). This work addressed how identity verification is affected by significant others in one’s environment (Burke and Cast 1997) or among others of varying status (Stets and Harrod 2004). For example, Burke and Cast examined how significant others in one’s environment influence identity standards during times of rapid change. They found that newly married couple’s gender identities became more masculine or feminine for men and women (respectively) after the birth of a child. This
research provides a basis for understanding how actors verify their identities amongst others in their environment. It also provides an abstract understanding of how elements of one’s social context can alter or influence one’s identity process. Disturbances in one’s social environment impact how people view themselves, and hence how they behave toward others.

What is absent however is a comparison of how such environmental factors may affect people when they are in discrete social contexts that differ from one another. For example, Burke and Cast examined dyadic relationships (husbands and wives), but what occurs when an individual is in a larger group and environmental disturbances signify that an identity is not being verified? How do people behave? How do they feel? Does the identity process operate different depending on what type of group a person is part of? Likewise, how do people react to identity non-verification when alone compared to when they are in a group? These questions regarding social context have only recently been examined. For example, Riley and Burke (1995) showed how shared meaning structures develop for people when they are in small groups, which allow groups members to interpret each other’s behavior in similar fashion. This “shared meaning structure” serves to verify group members’ identities. Studies such as Riley and Burke’s began to reveal how identity processes operate in social contexts, but study subjects in such studies were not placed in different contexts to compare how identity processes operate across settings.

In this dissertation I attempt to understand how such environmental factors influence behavior and emotions that stem from identity non-verification. I isolate contextual
factors to discover how people behave and feel when they are alone compared to when they are with others in a larger group. I do so to discover if people have more difficulty verifying their identities when among others than when alone, and if emotions emerge from non-verification in the same way regardless of social setting. Theoretically, it is important to address the identity verification process in different contexts so that we are certain that people first and foremost seek to confirm who they are, even when in social settings with multiple others in their presence. The issue at hand regards whether elements of the social context impede or augment identity verification processes (i.e. make it more or less difficult to verify an identity, engage in a behavior, or experience emotions in similar fashion when alone compared to when in a group).

Stets and Harrod’s (2004) work provided additional information about contextual factors that affect the identity verification process. They found that one’s relative status among others in the social structure determines their ability to verify their identities. Actors who have higher status in a social setting are more successful at verifying their identities than are lower status actors. When the context in which an actor exists changes and different people are present with differing levels of status, their ability to verify their identity changes. As people move into contexts where they have higher status and power over others, they are more successful at verifying their identities. This occurs because high status actors tend to have more resources at their disposal that assist in the verification process. Likewise, it becomes difficult for low status actors to verify their identities among higher status others because they lack the necessary resources.
This work was one of the most recent projects in identity theory that directly addresses factors of social context, and it raises new questions concerning the role one’s environment plays in the identity verification process. For example, is it easier for a low status actor to verify their identity when with both higher and same status individuals are together in the same social setting (such as the difference in attempting to verify a student identity in class compared to verifying it while with a professor during office hours)? Perhaps being part of an in-group of peers (same status others) is a resource that helps to maintain one’s group identity meanings when experiencing non-verification from a higher status other. In this situation, one might mitigate the negative feelings stemming from non-verification from the higher status other by relying on the alternate group-based identity. Also, one might receive support from other group members (such as sympathy), which provides meanings that verify the non-verified identity and serves to reduce the distress. The support or sympathy from others serves as a resource which provides meanings that could verify the identity not being verified by the higher status other (in other words, in-group members provide the necessary feedback needed to achieve verification and re-align the perception of the situation to the identity standard). Of course these questions need to be investigated empirically, but I attempt to answer questions such as whether being a part of a group mitigates the impact of the moral identity on behavior and emotions.

There has been additional research that has examined social context and identity processes, specifically work aimed at understanding the “reflected appraisal” process. Reflected appraisals are people’s interpretations (or perceptions) of others’ appraisals of
them in a social setting. Work on reflected appraisals examines how one’s perception of
others’ appraisals affects both communication and the identity process (Felson 1985;
Stets and Harrod 2004). Felson’s work shows that communication barriers often make it
difficult for one to make accurate appraisals concerning others’ motives (e.g. non-verbal
communication that is difficult to interpret). People thus rely on previously held notions
they have stored in memory that represent how they generally think another individual
views them. These notions represent one’s imagination of how one appears to others.
Felson’s work also showed that people tend to rely more on reflected appraisals when
they cannot make an accurate judgment about who they are in a situation. For example,
people are likely to use reflected appraisals more than self-appraisals in determining their
level of physical attractiveness, because one’s attractiveness is often based on the
opinions of others. Felson’s research reveals that reflected appraisals are often used to
perceive oneself in a situation, and offers a useful framework for identity theorists.

It is important to understand why it is necessary theoretically to examine social
context in identity theory. When advancing a theory that is cumulative, one must have a
sound reasoning for choosing which factors to study regarding a theory, specifically those
factors which have yet to be addressed. To this point research in identity theory has
mostly examined actors in isolation (Stets and Carter 2006). Some work has examined
dyads (Burke and Stets 2005) or small groups (Burke 2003a; Riley and Burke 1995), but
most research has not considered how actors achieve identity verification across contexts.
This dissertation extends previous work by not only examining actors’ identity processes
while alone, but also when actors are in triads, i.e. how identity verification processes
operate when people are part of a group as opposed to when people are alone. This is important because identity processes that operate in groups have implications for how we understand identity theory. One of the greatest strengths of identity theory is that it considers the role of others in the environment. But, we do not know how different contexts of group formation influence the identity process. This is important to discover because previous work in social psychology has shown the impact of groups on the individual. While identity theory predicts that actors strive to achieve verification of their identities, there has not been research that has examined how actors verify an identity that is competing with the meanings promoted by a group identity. Examining multiple identity processes that compete for verification is the next step in extending identity theory, and is necessary to continue to expand the theory as a general theory of action.

It is possible that the theoretical process concerning identity operates differently when actors are alone compared to when they are with others. This is not yet known, and has major implications for identity theory if it is so. For example, identities that are invoked in a group (such as a social identity) might over-ride other identities a person may attempt to control (such as a person identity). The presence of others in a social setting might serve to increase one’s ability to verify an identity, for example when everyone in a group tells a person that they are doing a great job on a task (acting to verify a worker identity). Such situations provide meanings that can be used to verify an identity, or specifically verify an identity that is more prominent to a person if competing meanings or identities are invoked in the situation. While the presence of others might also hinder one’s ability to achieve identity verification, like when others in a group tell a person that
they are slacking and not working as hard as everyone else (making it difficult to verify a worker identity). It is likely that these processes occur for actors when among others, identity theory has not yet been applied to such settings to reveal exactly how people behave when multiple processes are occurring.

There are many things that can influence how one behaves when one is part of a group. For example, one’s social identity that is attached to a group can influence behavior, the pressure from others to behave in specific ways can have an impact on behavior, and one’s master identities (such as their gender identity or moral identity) might impact behavior. But which of these processes is most influential in predicting behavior? In this dissertation I address how the moral identity,—a principle-level person identity—operates in for actors when they are alone or in group settings. A principle-level identity is a higher-ordered, master identity that influences both lower level identities and programs (i.e. behavior). Person identities are types of identities that represent who one is as a unique individual (more details are discussed regarding principle-level and person identities in the Theory chapter). Since the moral identity is a principle-level identity I expect it to influence actors’ behavior even when they are a part of a group (details on the moral identity, person identities, and principle-level identities are discussed later). I also expect that actors’ group-based identity will influence behavior as well (when an actor is part of a group in a situation). I do not know however which identity serves as the most powerful agent to influence behavior. To this point, research has not shown how actors control multiple identities simultaneously when among various others in the environment. I seek to discover how this process works in this dissertation.
This is important because it tells us about what is most important for an actor regarding the identity process: maintaining one’s personal meanings one has for themselves, or maintaining one’s group-based meanings that connect one to others in the social structure.

It is important to examine how groups impact the identity verification process because previous work in social psychology has identified many ways that groups affect the individual, particularly regarding behavior. For example, we do not yet know how people defer to authority or how people conform to groups when they are simultaneously attempting to verify themselves as moral individuals in a situation (assuming that deferring to authority or conforming to groups makes it difficult to verify one’s moral identity). Likewise, we do not yet know the difficulties that correspond with identity verification when an individual is part of a group whose motives are in opposition with the meanings of an identity, e.g. when an individual experiences peer pressure from a group to behave in a way that is discordant from one’s moral identity. Concerning identity activation, it is important to discover if it is true that higher-ordered, principle-level identities indeed operate across contexts like a “master” identity, or whether they must be activated in a situation in order to influence behavior (principle-level identities are discussed later). This dissertation attempts to further the knowledge of these aspects of identity verification.

**Identity Activation and Group Membership**

Two aspects of the social context are examined in this dissertation: the activation of an identity in a situation and being a member of a group. Previous research that has
examined identity verification processes have all dealt with identities that are *active* in a situation, but there has not been a study that has controlled for identity activation—specifically, there hasn’t been a study that compares how people behave in situations when a specific identity is either *activated* or *not activated*. Social identity theorists argue that an identity must be activated in order to influence behavior, but it is possible that *some* identities need activation in order to influence behavior more than *others*. In identity theory, higher ordered identities at the principle-level are understood to not require direct stimulus or activation in order to influence behavior. Principle-level identities are seen as always active to impact behavior across social contexts. This dissertation examines whether there are types of identities (i.e. principle-level identities) that do not require identity activation. It should be that higher ordered identities do not require direct activation in a social setting, but this has not been directly addressed until now.

Previous work in identity theory examined how the moral identity (a principle-level identity) influences behavior and emotions (Stets and Carter 2006). For example, the moral identity was found to predict behavior and emotions when people are in situations where they have a dilemma of whether to behave morally or immorally. This work did not address identity activation though, and we do not know how people behave if their moral identity is not invoked in the situation. Perhaps they would be more likely to behave immorally if they weren’t attempting to verify the meanings of their moral identity (identity theory would predict this to be so). It is not yet known, however, if principle-level identities require external activation (from others in a situation) or
whether they are activated internally due to the identity being relevant in its meaning dimensions with the meanings found in many different situations (and thus external meanings in a situation are not necessary for it to be activated). Perhaps principle-level identities are activated often because they apply to most situations. This dissertation examines if the moral identity requires direct activation in a setting or if it is continually active to influence behavior and emotions in situations. This dissertation attempts to clarify this issue by controlling for identity activation and testing this empirically.

Investigating the role of identity activation and group membership draws from important theoretical processes in social identity theory (Hogg 2006). In this way, this dissertation extends identity theory by studying critical processes that are the hallmark of multiple social psychological theories. In doing this, the predictive power of identity theory is tested, and ideas are examined across theoretical programs. By combining identity theory with social psychological processes emphasized in other theories, I can better determine the limits and possibilities of identity theory as a general theory of social behavior. This research also attempts to incorporate identity theory and social identity theory by applying elements of both theories to understand the identity process, an endeavor scholars in both theories have called for in the literature (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; Stets 2006; Stets and Burke 2000). Identity theory is used to understand how self-meanings influence behavior and emotions; social identity theory is used to understand how identities become activated in a situation, and how people behave when part of a group.
In this dissertation, I use the moral identity to examine how social context influences identity processes. I have been contributing to our understanding of the moral identity in identity theory and this dissertation continues this theoretical and empirical development (Carter 2005; Stets and Carter 2006; Stets et al. 2008). For example, morality is drawing increasing attention in our society given the alleged sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, the debate on health care reform, corporate scandals such as Enron and WorldCom, and the questionable moral character of individuals linked to the recent economic crisis (such as Bernie Madoff). Morality has also been a salient issue for many academics across the disciplines, with scholars and scientists offering exciting new ways to understand prosocial behavior. By examining individuals’ moral identities, I can study how moral actors behave to meet goals that are consistent with meanings in their identity standard. In turn, I can obtain an understanding as to how the patterns that form the moral order are maintained or threatened by the actions of individuals. It is within this larger objective that this dissertation is situated.

This project also attempts to continue and expand general sociological work regarding morality. Morality has received a growing interest in disciplines outside sociology, with only a few scholars taking an interest in sociological facets of morality. This is ironic because morality as a subject was once a central theme in sociological theory (discussed in detail later), and few would debate the centrality of morality in defining social processes in society at every level, from the most micro to the macro. Those sociologists who have returned to ask new questions about moral action and how the moral self operates in the social structure are creating a new tradition in the sociology
of morality, a tradition that emphasizes the importance of understanding how morality defines social processes at every level of analysis (whether micro, meso, or macro). I seek to expand knowledge about moral identity and moral behavior, continuing a tradition in identity theory that began half a decade ago and continues to the present day (Stets and Carter 2006; Stets et al. 2008; Turner and Stets 2006).

An important contribution of this dissertation to social psychology generally, and identity theory specifically, is how the social context influences well-established processes outlined in identity theory. To accomplish this, a survey was administered to study participants. The same participants then were placed in a laboratory study. To understand how identity processes operate across social contexts, the meanings of participants’ moral identity standards were obtained from the survey. In the laboratory study, participants were placed in a situation where they had to make a decision regarding acting morally or not.

The survey, which was extensively pre-tested, operationalized aspects of the moral self including one’s moral identity, and how prominent, salient, and committed one was to the moral identity. The survey also presented a series of situations laced with moral codes of acting morally or acting immorally. Individuals were to think about the last time they experienced such a situation and identify how they responded, how they felt following their actions, and how they perceived others saw them in the situation. If they never experienced such a situation, they were to imagine how they would respond and feel following their actions, and how they thought others would see them.
Several weeks later, these same individuals were involved in a laboratory study in which they were placed in a situation where they had to make a decision to act morally or immorally, where acting immorally increased their chances of winning a lottery. Their response to the situation was obtained either individually or in two types of task-oriented groups (one where group members pressured the individual to act immorally, and one where group members did not pressure the individual).

Finally, half of the study participants’ moral identities were activated in the individual and group conditions and compared to one another to discover whether people behave and feel differently when their identity is activated or not activated in a situation (the other half did not have their moral identity activated). Results from the survey are compared with results in the laboratory study to understand how the moral identity affects behavior and emotions when the identity is activated and when individuals are in different social contexts. Details regarding the employed theories, the background literature on moral identity, and the study methodology are presented in subsequent chapters.

The Benefit of Understanding Contextual Factors in Identity Theory

Identity theory offers a powerful conceptual tool to assist in understanding the basic sociological question: *what motivates human action?* Whatever the research endeavor, be it social psychological or otherwise, one’s efforts are most beneficial when their research findings are aimed at extending general sociological knowledge. While this dissertation only measures identity processes, it is conceived with the greater goal of furthering knowledge about behavior and emotions that emerges under given social structural
constraints—it seeks to extend our knowledge about what motivates action, and how people feel when they act toward others.

Early sociological theory was directly concerned with comprehending social action, i.e. what motivates people to behave toward one another, and why they seek to accomplish goals they have. Explanations for social action are found in the origins of sociological theory, including the work of Weber, Marx, and Durkheim, and in functionalist-oriented and social psychological work of the mid twentieth century (e.g. Talcott Parsons, George Homans, and James Coleman). While much of the work in contemporary sociology is concerned with race, gender, and social groups who oppress other groups, mainstream efforts toward understanding social action per se seem to have moved into the background. This is ironic because answers to processes behind racism and sexism are rooted in basic elements of social exchange and in the in-group/out-group dynamic that defines people’s social identities. The point is that many contemporary sociologists seem to be studying what is going on rather than seeking to explain why it is so. Identity theory follows the trajectory of early sociological theory by seeking to understand social action and by providing a framework to explain both what an actor will do and why they do it.

In addition to attempting to explain why people behave and feel the way they do, identity theory does not isolate the actor apart from his or her environment as do many psychologically based theories of the self. Identity theory always treats the actor as embedded in the social structure and emphasizes that disturbances in the identity verification process come from the environment. Ironically, as noted previously most
research in identity theory to this point has not directly addressed elements of the environment during the verification process. For example, past research on the moral identity has examined how people verify who they are in different situations (Stets and Carter 2006), but such knowledge is limited in the sense that we do not know if actors behave and feel differently while alone as opposed to with others. For example, there is a lack of work that has addressed how people verify their identity when they are in task-oriented groups.

There also has not been extensive work that has examined how group processes affect identity verification processes, for example whether individuals have difficulty verifying an identity when others in a situation are demanding behavior that is incongruent with their identity meanings. How does one verify their moral identity when they are part of a group? How do group dimensions or dynamics (such as the group size and pressure to conform to group expectations) affect one’s ability to verify their identities? Since past work has shown identity theory to be robust in explaining how people behave and feel in situations, the time has come to compare such processes across different settings, including when actors are alone and when they are in groups.

Understanding the identity process across contexts will reveal if the identity verification process operates differently when one is in different social settings, i.e. whether one chooses to verify one identity over another in order to feel positive emotions (i.e. to maintain a consistent image of who they are in the situation to why they believe themselves to be). Such knowledge is necessary for identity theory if it is to retain its robustness as a general sociological theory that can explain social behavior. The theory
will become more robust because we will know more about how groups affect an individual who is attempting to verify who they are, and whether emotions emerging from non-verification are similar or different in group settings than when actors are alone. If it is revealed that regardless of social context actors first and foremost strive to verify the meanings they hold for who they are, it will provide further evidence for the importance maintaining the self-concept above other social psychological processes (such as group conformity).

In addition to continuing the research program of identity theory, applying identity theory to understand how actors verify identities in different social contexts can help buttress Solomon Asch’s (Asch 1951, 1956) classic findings in social psychology regarding group conformity, or research regarding social impact theory (Lantane 1981). Asch found that people conform to others’ expectations while part of an experimentally controlled group, even when a person believes others’ actions are ill-conceived or counter-normative. People conform so as not to look bad in the eyes of others who have determined group norms. Doing so likely verifies one’s group-based identity. However, Asch did not address how a competing, higher-ordered identity (such as the moral identity) might influence behavior in the same situation.

Other classical social psychological research revealed that people conform to pressure when feeling the social impact of others (Latane and Wolf 1981). Social impact theory predicts that people feel pressure to conform to a group depending on the group’s size and the immediacy (or proximity) of others. These revelations regarding group dynamics correspond to the most basic tenets of social psychology: people are social beings who
want to be accepted (i.e. they have social identities), and people generally feel negative emotions when they believe they do not meet the standards set by others in the social structure.

So, how does this relate to identity theory and this dissertation? Past findings concerning group conformity and group pressure do not consider how the identity process mitigates behavioral dynamics. Identity theory predicts that people behave in ways consistent with their identity standard meanings, which begs the question, what is more influential on behavior, one’s identities or the pressure from others to conform to a group’s demands (assuming one’s identity meanings are discordant with the demands of a group)? Identity theory does not make separate claims for behavior and emotions felt from identity verification across different settings, only that people seek to verify their identities by controlling perceptions of themselves in their environment. What happens when a person’s identity meanings are discordant with the meanings supported by a group in which they belong? For example, if one has an identity with meanings aligned with being honorable and respectable, how will they behave if a group they are part of makes a majority decision to act in a dishonorable way? Such an example can be illustrated by a person who has a pacifist identity that is strongly in opposition to any form of violence yet is drafted to go to war for a country. How does one’s identity operate to influence behavior in this situation? Does one’s pacifist identity act to influence action (to not go to war and thus break the law), or does one follow the law and fight? Identity theory would predict that one would seek to verify the most prominent (i.e. important) or salient (i.e. relevant to the situation) identity (or both).
To this point identity theorists have not directly addressed how one behaves when group members demand behavior that is outside the acceptable range of one’s identity standard meanings. One could deduce that since the behavior is outside the range of an identities meanings an actor would not behave in such a way (in order to not experience negative emotions), but a systematic study has not identified whether this is so or not. These questions have not yet been answered, but they are important questions to consider if we are to have a complete understanding of the identity process. The basic theoretical underpinning for why we should examine social context in identity theory is that the identity verification process may be mitigated by one’s group membership, and hence require the theory to re-consider how actors verify their identities when among others. Group attachment and social pressure from others have both been found to influence behavior. These dynamics have implications for how people verify their identities when part of a group. This dissertation provides some interesting insights to these classic findings, and raises some new questions regarding what motivates people’s behavior.

To summarize, identity theory stays true to the classic sociological charter of seeking to understand social action. This dissertation revisits some of the fundamental processes regarding social action, particularly how and under what contexts people conform to group norms. The results of this dissertation reveal some interesting things regarding what we thought we knew about group conformity and individualization; what is found is that people seek to verify self-meanings that represent who they are, even when facing a majority influence. I have discovered that, at least in the contexts examined herein, while people do conform to group expectations, they also act in order to fulfill individual
expectations of behavior (i.e. to verify the meanings of their identity). Let us now examine past theoretical work concerning morality, moral identity, and moral behavior and how it relates to this dissertation to reveal why this is so.
CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

I apply identity theory (Burke et al. 2003; Burke and Stets 2009; Stryker and Burke 2000) to the moral self to gain a better conception of how identity, behavior, and emotions operate together to influence interactions with others and maintain the moral order, specifically to find whether people seek to verify their moral identity in situations where they have an opportunity to behave immorally to gain an advantage over others. Identity theory offers a framework to understand how morality influences actors’ behavior and emotions in social situations. Identity theory conceives the self as a multifaceted entity which includes a complex structure of multiple identities.

An identity is an “internal positional designation” which represents the meanings actors have that allow them to define themselves as unique individuals (person identities), as role occupants (role identities), or as group members (social identities) (Stets 2006; Stryker [1980] 2002). Identity meanings can thus be conceived as standards which influence one’s behavior during an interaction (Burke 1991). Identity standards provide reference points that actors seek to verify in the environment, and are used to differentiate oneself from others in the social structure.

Social, role, and person identities help to sustain the self. Social identities define acceptable behavior, provide boundaries regarding interactions, and provide goals for individuals as group members. Examples of group identities include being Muslim, Libertarian, or a fan of the Boston Red Sox. Group identities attach individuals to others and maintain a sense of self-worth (Stets and Burke 2000, 2002).
Role identities (as with social identities) provide meanings for an individual concerning their relative positions to others in the social structure. Examples of role identities include being a quarterback of a football team, being a student, or being a sister. Individuals feel competent and efficacious when they accomplish goals associated with a role (Stets and Burke 2000, 2002). Role identities thus are a key to maintaining one’s sense of self-efficacy and are thus a central component of the self. Person identities help an individual realize a sense of individuality. These identities represent the meanings one has which define them as a unique bio-social being (rather than as a role holder or group member) such as being compassionate, competitive, dominant (Stets and Burke 1994; Stets and Carter 2006). Person identities are often invoked across multiple situations as they are not attached to specific roles or groups. Person identities are diffuse and can be thought of as master identities in the overall identity hierarchy. Verification of person identities allows one to feel authentic and important—that they are unique, special, and different from others. I focus on the moral identity (a person identity) in this dissertation.

The internal dynamics of an identity, whether a person, role, social identity, operates within a perceptual control system (Burke 1991). In this perpetual control system, an individual’s identity meanings can be thought of as identity standards. When an identity is activated in a situation, the control system operates to match perceptions of the self in a situation (based on actual and reflected appraisals in the situation as to whom one is) with one’s identity standard (see Figure 1). Individuals are motivated to seek out situations where they can actively maintain congruence between their identity standard and their
perception of themselves. When situational meanings match identity standards it is called *identity verification*.

![Control Systems Identity Model](image)

**Figure 1. Control Systems Identity Model**

Successful identity verification results in the experience of positive emotions. Identity non-verification results in negative emotions. This occurs when there is a discrepancy between meanings one has regarding a situation and one’s identity standard. Individuals attempt to verify their identities—their conception of who they are, the roles they play, and the groups in which they belong—among others in social situations in order to feel good about themselves. When a discrepancy occurs and one experiences identity non-verification, he or she will act to resolve the discrepancy. There are three general lines of
action one may take in these instances: one may change their behavior in the situation, change their perceptions of how they think they are seen in the situation, or change their identity standard meanings. Identity theory thus predicts that people act to match their perception of a situation to the meanings held in the standard.

The moral identity within identity theory is based on Powers’ (1973) perceptual control theory (Stets and Carter 2006). Perceptual control theory treats the human organism as a hierarchical control system where higher ordered controls affect lower level controls (Powers 1973; Robertson and Powers 1990). Powers conceives, as do I, that moral standards reside at the principle-level of control. Thus, the moral identity is a principle-level identity which influences program level behavior—the program level being below the principle-level in the overall control hierarchy.

The program level controls perceptions of goal achievement, specifically whether action-sequences directed at accomplishing goals are met. The program level represents the behavior one employs to meet such goals. Goals can be anything, such as walking down the street to get one’s mail or donating to a homeless person. The program level consists of a series of test points which operate as an “if-then” structure where if A is true, do B; if A is false, do C, etc. Program level test points form an overall network of possibilities where goals may be accomplished using multiple strategies or choices. Choices from test point to test point may open new avenues of potential action, predicated on previously selected test points. Programs emerge when goals arise and terminate upon completion. For example, one’s goal of driving to work may be accomplished multiple ways. One may opt to use the fast lane, or choose a more leisurely
journey by driving in the slow lane. Either choice results in the ultimate goal being accomplished, yet in a different way.

The principle-level provides standards for program controls (i.e. behavior), and influences what behavior is selected to accomplish goals. Principle-level standards are general and diffuse, and are met by aligning program level behavior in ways consistent with those standards. Principle-level standards represent abstract goals (such as being kind or compassionate); program level behavior is specific and applies directly to a given situation (such as giving to a homeless person). The principle-level moral identity thus influences behavior and is posited to be active across multiple situations. As mentioned in the introduction, research in identity theory has not yet examined empirically whether the moral identity operates similarly when the identity is activated or not. This dissertation seeks to further the knowledge of the moral identity as a principle-level identity and whether it truly operates as it has been conceived in prior literature.

Researchers in identity theory have only just begun to examine how the moral identity operates as a component of the moral self, specifically how it operates as a principle-level identity. Indeed, a research program has only just emerged and scholars are currently examining various facets of how the moral identity operates in the overall hierarchy of identities (Carter 2005; Stets and Carter 2006; Stets et al. 2008).

**Past Research in Identity Theory Regarding the Moral Identity**

In order to understand the reasoning behind examining the moral identity in this dissertation, a brief summary of the literature on moral identity in identity theory is necessary. Identity theorists have begun to study morality at the micro level, though the
efforts have only just emerged over the past decade. To this point work in identity theory has examined how the moral identity influences behavior and emotions in moral dilemmas, how the moral identity is defined by different social categories (i.e. race, gender, and religion), and how moral identity verification and moral emotions are mitigated by social structural dynamics such as status. I briefly summarize each of these studies next.

**Linking the Moral Identity Standard to Behavior and Emotions**

Stets and Carter (2006) found that the moral identity predicts normative behavior for individuals in moral situations. When individuals ranked high on the moral identity (meaning they were very compassionate, principled, or fair) they were more likely to engage in behavior consistent with such meanings, such as returning a lost wallet to its owner, donating to a charity, and returning money to a cashier when the individual received more change than what was owed during a purchase. Also, when a discrepancy existed between an individual’s moral identity meanings and behavior consistent with such meanings, they experienced negative emotions. Individuals who ranked high on the dimensions of the moral identity and who did not return a wallet, donate to a charity, return money to a cashier, or give to a homeless person reported more negative emotions.

These findings are consistent with identity theory in that a lack of correspondence between identity standard meanings and the reflected appraisals of one’s behavior in a situation results in a disruption in the verification process. They illustrate how the moral identity functions to influence action when one is faced with moral dilemmas, but more
importantly how identities operate as a perceptual control system where the principle-
level activation of the moral identity influences program level, normative behavior.

This was the first published work that applied identity theory to understand the moral
self. It in many ways provided the foundation for subsequent work, which began to
address other facets of the moral identity and how it influences behavior and emotions for
different people in society. The first project that followed this work examined whether
the moral identity operated similarly for people, regardless of their gender, race, or
religion. I turn to that now.

**The Moral Identity and Race, Gender, and Religion**

My Master’s thesis on the moral identity investigated whether the moral identity as a
person identity operated in the same way across social categories, as identity theory
predicts (Carter 2005). Using data collected from 315 undergraduate students at a large
Southwestern university in 2002, I found that generally the identity verification process
operates the same regardless of group affiliation (across gender, race, or religion), though
significant differences in *ranking* on the moral identity were found concerning gender
and religion.

Females reported higher rankings on the moral identity (meaning they were more
caring, friendly, compassionate, etc. compared to males), which is consistent in the
literature which addresses gender differences regarding morality (DeVault 1991; Eder
research has shown that females have been identified to be more interdependent than
independent, and these traits tend to correlate with one being more caring and kind. Thus, the fact that females had higher moral identities than males is not particularly surprising.

Similarly, respondents who identified with a religion ranked higher on the moral identity than did respondents who reported having no religion. This finding is also consistent with the literature regarding the connection between religion and morality (Ames 1928; Wilson 2003; Woodrum 1988). Religious meanings share much in common with meanings of morality, for example most religions encourage acts of kindness towards others, or the idea that all humankind is connected and that others should be cherished. Some even have notions of justice, such as “an eye for an eye” regarding moral transgressions. This being the case, it is not surprising that those who identified with a religion ranked higher on the moral identity than those who did not.

This project also examined whether the meanings of the moral identity differed across social categories (i.e. whether people with different background characteristics such as race, gender, or religion had similar notions of what is moral, or more specifically, whether care and justice represented their moral identities). There were no differences in the meanings of the moral identity across groups. In other words, items characterizing the moral identity were equally important in identifying the moral identity for women and men and those from different races and religions. This finding is important because it reveals that the dimensions of meaning (care and justice) are the same regardless of group affiliation, supporting its validity as being representative of what is considered moral across different social categories.
After discovering that the moral identity meanings applied to all types of people, new questions emerged regarding how it operated when people were with others of varying status. Research to this point only examined simple settings (such as the actor in isolation and apart from others), and did not control for status of others that may be present in a situation. Also, emotional reactions to identity non-verification were addressed in a dichotomous way, only measuring positive or negative emotions. Since the moral identity is related to moral emotions, one should experience moral emotions such as guilt or shame when their moral identity is not verified. Identity theorists addressed this in the next project, examining how the moral identity operated in situations with actors of differing status, and how moral emotions emerged during non-verification.

**Moral Identity, Status, Moral Emotions, and the Normative Order**

More recent work on the moral identity examines the moral identity, status, moral emotions, and the normative order (Stets et al. 2008). Stets et al. investigated how the moral identity guides behavior in interaction and how the identity process operates in situations to influence reports of moral emotions, and how both the moral identity and moral emotions serve to uphold the normative order. The scope of identity theory was expanded in this research by addressing how absolute and relative status of self and others in the social structure corresponded to reports of specific moral emotions: the “other-critical” moral emotion of anger, the “other-suffering” moral emotion of empathy, and the “self-critical” moral emotions of shame and guilt (Turner and Stets 2006). The authors identified how individuals experience moral emotions differently depending on the relative status of others in the environment, furthering our understanding of how
actors’ moral identities influence emotional reactions to behavior depending on the structural position of self and others in the situation.

Stets et al. found that both the identity process and the status of others in situations influenced individuals’ behavior and reports of moral emotions. Those with high rankings on the moral identity were more likely to engage in normative behavior, and to feel less self-critical emotions (shame and guilt). Consistent with Carter’s (2005) findings, Stets et al. also found that females ranked higher on the moral identity than males; females also were more likely to engage in normative behavior than were males. This finding regarding gender is a proxy for how status influences moral emotions. By having higher status in society, males likely feel more entitled to violate social expectations, and hence are more likely to act immorally.

Other findings regarding status included that high status actors (whites) were more likely to report specific other-critical moral emotions (e.g. anger), and low status actors (nonwhites, females, and persons with low income) were more likely to report other-suffering moral emotions (e.g. empathy and guilt). Similar to high status actors’ behavior being influenced by a sense of entitlement, low status actors likely reported moral emotions because they were more sensitive and attentive to others in situations. This research reveals the importance of considering situational factors in the identity verification process. It answered questions regarding how people behave and feel when among others of varying status, but spawned new questions about how people behave in groups as opposed to when alone, and how people respond when people pressure them to behave in ways not aligned with their moral identity.
The three recent applications of the moral identity to identity theory—Stets and Carter’s (2006) original work, Carter’s (2005) testing of moral identity processes and group membership, and Stets et al.’s (2008) work on status, moral emotions and the normative order—have expanded our understanding of morality, behavior, and emotions, and also have extended the scope of identity theory. To summarize, identity theory emphasizes the link between emotions, identity standards, and behavior. As mentioned previously, positive emotions result from identity verification and negative emotions result from identity non-verification. To this point there has not been research which thoroughly investigates how identity standards, behavior, and emotions are influenced in different social contexts. We do not yet know if people have difficulty verifying their identities more in some social settings than in others. As mentioned previously, theoretically the identity verification process may be mitigated by other factors such as group attachment or social pressure. This dissertation investigates these unexplored areas within the realm of the moral identity and identity theory. I explore how identity activation, group membership, and relative status influence the identity/behavior/emotion process as defined by identity theory.

Identity theory provides a strong framework for understanding the moral identity. Given the fact that I am examining how social context (i.e. group membership) influences identity processes and how the moral identity operates when it is activated, I also apply social identity theory. Work in social identity theory has revealed the mechanisms by which an identity becomes activated in a situation (which is undeveloped in identity theory). I manipulate the activation of the moral identity in this study, so I rely on the
knowledge social identity theory has gained regarding this. I also employ social identity theory because I examine how the identity processes operates for people who are part of an in-group. I discuss these processes in detail in the next section.

**Incorporating Social Identity Theory**

In addition to identity theory, I use social identity theory to better understand how the moral identity operates in different social contexts. Multiple theories are used to better conceive how the moral identity influences behavior when activated (or not activated), and when individuals are alone, in a group, or in a group where group members pressure actors to act immorally. A combined approach benefits our understanding of the identity process both theoretically and methodologically. Each theory has its own respective strengths, and together they describe the internal processes of identity verification (identity theory), the factors that activate an identity, and how actors identify with an in-group over an out-group (social identity theory).

Theoretical research on the relationship between groups and social identity originated in Europe by Tajfel (1981, 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1985), who investigated how group processes shape social identities, and vice-versa. Social identity theory emerged from this work, and scientists began to systematically document the mechanisms behind why people defer to group leaders, why they behave in accord with group expectations, and why they deviate from their usual courses of action when amongst others.

As in identity theory, social identity theory also posits the self as reflexive with the ability to take the role of the other. Social identity theory addresses the self-concept when attached to a group, as well as the mechanisms of group processes and intergroup
relations (Abrams and Hogg 1990; Hogg 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2006; Hogg and Ridgeway 2003; Tajfel and Turner 1985). Social identity theory’s benefit to understanding identity processes centers on the notion that collective phenomena cannot be understood simply by focusing on individual or interpersonal interaction, but that groups one is attached to also influence behavior. Social identity theory assumes that a group consists of three or more people, where together they evaluate themselves in terms of similar attributes that distinguish them as a unique entity from others. The theory generally addresses three mechanisms of group identity: centrality (which refers to how accessible one’s identity is), affect (which is one’s self-evaluation of feelings toward an in-group), and group cohesion (where the identity reflects closeness of ties and a sense of belonging to a group) (Hogg 2006).

Social identity theorists believe that activated social identities function psychologically to increase the influence of attachment to a group (Oakes 1987). Social identity theory’s conception of identity activation is similar to identity theory’s concept of identity salience, but rather than treating identities which apply to situations in terms of the probability of their activation, social identity theory treats identities as either activated or not activated depending on whether the identity is relevant to a given situation. When an identity is activated in a situation it allows individuals to accomplish personal and social goals. Identity theory emphasizes social structural arrangements and the link between situational meanings and identity meanings; social identity theory emphasizes characteristics of situations which may activate an identity (such as a
situation that contains moral meanings which activates one’s moral identity) (Stets and Burke 2000).

Concerning attachment to groups, social identity theory examines how actors identify with in-groups and simultaneously how actors categorize and depersonalize members associated with out-groups. The theory conceives group identities developing from processes of self-categorization which attaches an individual to a group (creating a positive evaluation of in-group membership), and processes of social comparison in which individuals compare themselves and others within their associated group to others outside the group (creating negative evaluations for those who are perceived to belong to out-groups) (Stets and Burke 2000). Actors who associate with an in-group are likely to be influenced by in-group expectations, or to act in ways which maintain positive evaluations from other members of the in-group.

Both notions of activation and the three mechanisms of group identity are applied in this dissertation to examine identity processes across social contexts, specifically how actors verify their identities across settings, how their identities influence behavior, and how they feel when they experience identity non-verification. In this dissertation, social identity theory provides the framework that explains the activation of the moral identity, and explains the in-group/out-group dynamic that is manipulated in the laboratory study. More details concerning how identity activation and group attachment relate to the dissertation are discussed in the methods section.
Study Hypotheses

While the details of the study methodology are discussed in the forthcoming methods section, a brief overview of the study is necessary to understand the logic of the study hypotheses. To investigate how the moral identity influenced behavior across contexts, a survey and experiment were administered to a sample of university students. The survey measured their moral identity, and the lab experiment placed them into different conditions in which they were to complete a task. They were told that their chances to win a lottery increased the better they did on the task. The task was manipulated (via a supposed computer malfunction) to give the subject more points on the task than they actually earned. This introduced a moral dilemma for the subject, where they could choose to admit to the study confederate that they were over-scored (i.e. behave morally) or say nothing in order to maintain an advantage over others in the study (i.e. behave immorally). Subjects completed this task either while alone, as part of a group that was competing against a separate group (the group’s task performance was compared to their competing group’s task performance to see who had a better chance to win the lottery), or part of a group whose group members directly pressured the subject to behave immorally to ensure beating the group they were competing against.

The Moral Identity

Regardless of social context, I expect that individuals will behave consistent with the meanings held in their moral identity standard (i.e. I expect that individuals in the study are more likely to behave morally when their moral identity is high compared to those whose moral identity is low). This is predicted by identity theory: actors seek to verify
the meanings of their identity in situations in order to feel good about themselves and maintain that they indeed are who they think they are. If they have a high moral identity, they will be more likely to act in a moral fashion; if they have a low moral identity, they will be more likely to act immorally. Thus, the first hypothesis is:

**H1: The higher a person’s moral identity, the more likely the person will engage in moral behavior.**

**Identity Activation**

Identity theory focuses on how people try to verify identities in their social structures, and predicts that people’s most salient identities are most likely to be invoked (or activated) in a given situation. I define *identity activation* as the process by which an identity is triggered and subsequently controlled by an individual in a situation. An identity is activated when an actor perceives that situational meanings in the environment are relevant to the meanings of an identity.

Social identity theory does not directly deal with identity salience per se, but emphasizes how specific characteristics that exist in a situation can activate an identity. As mentioned previously, in social identity theory, an identity becomes active through accessibility (the readily available social categories such as gender, race, etc.) and fit (how accessible categories are used to make sense of one’s social context). Social identity theorists conflate the concepts of identity activation and identity salience, and identity theorists have not examined identity activation in studies to this point (i.e. they have not controlled for them in a laboratory setting to discover how identities operate when active or not active) (Stets and Burke 2000).
I treat identity activation as a distinct process that occurs in a situation by controlling for it in my study. As mentioned in the introduction, social identity theory posits that identities must be activated to influence behavior, but there is the possibility that some identities require direct activation from a stimulus in the environment more than do others. The moral identity in identity theory is understood to be a principle-level identity, and therefore identity activation from an external stimulus may not be necessary to influence behavior and emotions in a situation. I examine the greater issue of whether some identities require direct activation more than others.

Half the participants in the study had their moral identity activated by an external source prior to their lab participation, and the other half did not have their moral identity activated. The manipulation of moral identity activation is described in the method section below. Since the moral identity is posited as a principle-level identity that influences behavior in many situations, direct activation should not be required for it to influence behavior. Therefore, I offer the following hypothesis:

**H2: The moral identity will influence behavior regardless of whether or not it is activated by an external stimulus.**

*Group Membership*

A second contextual factor I examine in this dissertation is the influence of group membership on the moral identity process. While identity theorists have focused on identity processes in groups, it has mainly been in terms of leadership behavior (Burke 2003b, 2006; Burke, Stets, and Cerven 2007; Riley and Burke 1995). In this dissertation,
I am interested in how a group-based identity as outlined in social identity theory influences how the moral identity operates as a person identity in identity theory.

Classic experiments by Asch (1952, 1956) and Crutchfield (1955) showed how individuals conform to the judgments of a numerical majority in group settings even when the majority is obviously incorrect in their decision making on an objective task. In Asch’s famous experiment on group conformity he demonstrated how an individual in a group will agree with others and conform to the normative behavior of the group. Asch’s findings and other similar research provided a foundation for future social psychological studies on group processes which investigated the influence groups have on individuals (Bales 1951; Caplow 1968; Cartwright and Zander 1960).

Recall that in social identity theory, when individuals identify with a group, there is uniformity in one’s response cognitively, attitudinally, and behaviorally in terms of meanings relevant to the group (Hogg and Abrams 1988; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner 1994). With respect to these dimensions, group members have prototypical perceptions of in-group and out-group members, they uniformly make positive evaluations of their own group, and they behave in concert within a group. Thus, in-group members, compared to members of out-groups, become a collective of similar persons who identify with each other, hold similar views, and behave in like fashion. When one identifies with a group, depersonalization occurs. Here, group members see themselves as embodying the group prototype rather than expressing themselves as a unique person through, for example, a person identity.
Given these social identity dynamics I expect that individuals will be guided by identity meanings promoted prototypically by the group when they participate in a group task. It is likely that when an individual is in a group and is faced with a decision to act immorally so that each group member has a better chance to receive a monetary reward, the individual is more likely to do so to benefit the group (compared to when the individual is alone). They are likely to do so because their group identity is providing the meanings in which they seek to verify. Past literature has shown the effect of groups on the individual, and that actors behave in line with group expectations even when they know such behavior is outside what they would normally do (Asch 1956). Recall that subjects in this study completed a task where they encountered a moral dilemma providing them an opportunity to behave immorally, and that some subjects did the task alone while others participated in groups. Considering that social identity theory predicts that people favor in-groups due to individuals’ deep rooted desire to maintain positive social identities\(^3\), I offer a third hypothesis:

**H3: When given an opportunity to behave immorally to gain a reward, an individual will be more likely to behave immorally when part of an in-group than when the individual is alone.**

Work in identity theory has not yet addressed how identity processes differ in group settings. In a group setting where a leader or majority chooses a course of action for the

---

\(^3\) While it is true that in-group favoritism assumes that an in-group identity is prominent for an actor (as identity theory would predict), research has shown that even a small degree of group classification or identification is sufficient to create an in-group bias. Tajfel’s “minimal group experiment” showed how naming a person into group “A” while others belong to group “B” is enough for a person in group A to identify with group A, dis-identify with group B, and evaluate group A more positively than group B (Tajfel 1979).
entire group the course of action may be discordant with an individual’s person identity meanings related to the behavior. For example, teenagers in peer groups often conform to the demands of others and behave in ways they would not while alone. Individuals sometimes deviate from their normal lines of action to appease others in a group. This phenomenon is also common in more formal, task-oriented groups. While a group’s course of action may reflect a consensus of its members, it is also possible that each individual member has varying opinions on that course of action, and a minority may disagree whole-heartedly about proceeding with the majority but do so to maintain their position and acceptance within the group.

Since the impact of group dynamics on person identities and behavior has not been investigated within identity theory, questions regarding how an individual will behave when in a group whose influence is at odds with the individual’s identity have yet to be answered. For example, what happens when an individual has an identity that contradicts the values of the group? Is the person more likely to behave consistent with the identity or in accord with what benefits the group? Identity theory would predict that the most salient identity in the situation would seek verification. Since identity theory claims that people seek to verify their identities, the person should behave consistent with their identity meanings, even if that behavior is different from the expectations of others in a group (unless the group identity is more salient). Otherwise the person will feel negative emotions. The moral identity provides a good way of discovering if a person will behave according to his/her identity standard meanings (as the theory predicts), or if he/she conforms to the group’s expectations when those demands are counter-normative from
what is expected in greater society. This is so because the moral identity is a principle-level identity which is expected to influence lower level identities (such as a group identity) as well as behavior. Because actors attempt to control their perceptions of who they are and seek to verify meanings held in an identity, the following hypothesis is provided concerning the moral identity and group membership:

**H4: When in an in-group and given an opportunity to behave immorally to gain a reward, an individual will be less likely to behave immorally when their moral identity is high.**

**Group Pressure**

Along with the impact of group membership on the identity process, I also examine how the identity process operates for actors when they are part of a group and other group members actively pressure them to behave immorally. There is extensive research on behavioral processes concerning pressure to behave against normative expectations, especially in psychological social psychology. The classic obedience experiments by Stanley Milgram (1974, 1977) showed how people behave differently from what they know to be morally correct when an authority figure pressures them to do so. Subsequent work expanded these findings concerning individual behavior and applied the concepts to group processes, documenting how actors behave differently when pressured by other group members than they would behave alone (Cecil, Chertkoff, and Cummings 1970; Milgram 1965). Here, the influence of social impact on individual action is documented as a function of many things, including the strength of social pressure, the immediacy of
the pressure, and numbers of actors providing the influence to behave a certain way (Lantane 1981; Latane and Wolf 1981).

Research on group pressure has revealed similar findings as documented by social identity theorists—that people conform and acquiesce to group pressure so as to not feel like an outsider or risk being cast out of the group altogether (Asch 1956). Generally speaking, the social influence of in-groups is powerful on the individual, and only the most independent, confident, and autonomous individuals go against majority pressure and deviate from courses of action others in the group promote. Group pressure is important to consider in identity theory because it may be an independent aspect that influences behavior in addition to one’s identity meanings (i.e. it is an additional social force that impacts one’s behavior). Group pressure is conceptualized in this dissertation as the degree of social impact experienced by an individual from other group members. Specific to this study, group pressure is manipulated using text messages that directly and explicitly suggest a course of action (to behave in way that provides an advantage for the in-group while diminishing the advantage of out-group members). Considering the impact of group pressure on an individual, I hypothesize:

**H5: An individual will be more likely to act immorally when part of an in-group when other group members pressure them to do so compared to when other group members do not pressure them to act immorally.**

---

4 The degree of social impact is represented qualitatively by language used by the computer generated actors in the study (described in detail in the method section). Study participants are pressured to behave immorally through text messages that suggest specific behavior that benefits the in-group.
Similar to what is predicted in hypothesis 4, identity theory scholars have not yet examined how identity processes operate in group pressure settings when the moral identity is low or high. Since the theory predicts that principle-level identities guide lower level identities (such as a group identity) and behavior across contexts, and that people strive to verify their identities so as not to experience negative emotions, the following hypothesis is offered regarding the moral identity and group pressure:

**H6: When an individual is in a group where in-group members pressure them to act immorally, individuals will be less likely to behave immorally when their moral identity is high.**

**Emotions**

According to identity theory, actors experience negative emotions when they cannot verify an identity. If individuals feel negative emotions while in a group, then others have caused a disturbance in the situation, meaning an individual feels negative emotions because self-in-situation meanings are incongruent with their identity standard meanings (i.e. a discrepancy between the identity standard and the situational meanings has occurred). The greater one’s identity is discrepant with who they perceive themselves to be in a situation, the more intense their experience of negative emotions. Since identity theory predicts an individual will feel badly when an identity standard does not match situational inputs (Burke 1991; Stets 2004, 2005; Stets and Burke 2005; Stets et al. 2008), I offer the following hypothesis:

**H7: The greater an individual’s moral identity discrepancy, the more likely the individual will report negative emotions.**
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Now that the theoretical foundation and study hypotheses for the dissertation have been introduced, I turn to a discussion on morality in general as it is examined across academic disciplines. Research and thought about morality is well represented in many fields. While some of the previous work on morality proper is more applicable to this study than others, I provide a systematic review of morality as it applies to those fields that are currently engaged in a discussion about things moral. I also comment on why the work is relevant not only for the study at hand, but for the general sociology of morality which has recently been re-emerging in the academy.

Review of the Classical Scholarship on Morality

Morality is one of the oldest intellectual topics, cited in early writings of the Mesopotamians and found throughout world literature from every era (including the Code of Hammurabi, the Hindu Vedas, the Christian Bible, and philosophical writings from Plato) (Haidt 2008). Moral themes abound in Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1939 [1651]) in his telling of a world of all against all, and Adam Smith addresses it directly in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2000 [1759]). Aristotle (1926) claimed that to thrive as a human being one must live according to moral virtues. And, David Hume (1984 [1739]) stated that moral sentiments determine the perception of a phenomenon as virtuous or despicable—that moral sentiments guide approval or disapproval of the self and others and the physical world. There are myriad examples of morality as a central subject across literature and philosophy, and of course morality as a theme has inspired some of the
greatest works of art and world masterpieces as well by depicting moral transgressions of
man vs. man, man vs. God, acts of taboo, and so on.

Most classical thought on morality is found in philosophy and theology, concerning
moral dilemmas, ethics, and moral epistemology. Classical thought on moral dilemmas
regards social problems where morality is relevant, and the problem implies that one
must choose between two or more courses of action, both being morally correct (Sinnott-
Armstrong 1999). Moral dilemmas depict human problems in their most ultimate sense,
as a strict dichotomy of choice. They represent the potential downside of human
autonomy and agency—free-will can lead to difficult choices. For example, Jean Paul
Sartre (1957) provided a classic moral dilemma regarding a man who must choose
whether to care for his mother in Paris or to go to England to fight the Nazis during
World War II. Both are the morally “right” thing to do, but only one course of action can
be taken. By choosing to stay with his mother there is less resistance against the Nazis;
by leaving to fight he may never see his mother again.

Another classic moral dilemma regarding man vs. God is found in the tale of
Abraham, where Abraham struggles to decide whether to obey God and sacrifice his son,
or disobey God to let his son live. Both courses of action are moral in the biblical sense in
that man is expected to both follow God but also is expected protect his family. Yet
another moral dilemma is the “Heinz” dilemma, where a man named Heinz must decide
whether to steal medicine that his sick wife desperately needs to live. It is immoral to
steal, yet immoral to let one’s wife die knowing one has the capacity to help her. These
classic dilemmas have spawned philosophical debate about moral choice and moral
relativism, for example in the Heinz dilemma, can it ever be considered immoral to take steps toward saving one’s wife? Does morality define behavioral expectations in a vacuum, or is it more contextual? Philosophers have debated this notion for a long time, and there is no absolute or correct way in which to solve such dilemmas.

While much of the early thought on morality in philosophy were based on logical abstractions or thought experiments in many ways removed from actual human experience, there were a few philosophers who turned their attention toward understanding the moral meanings of social action. For example, many of the precursors to contemporary symbolic interactionism were either moralists or wrote about morality, including the Scottish moral philosophers and the American pragmatists. “Morality” for such figures was an element in constructing research agendas and forging philosophical truths. To be a quality scholar was to be a moral scholar; for these men one must not waste time mulling about abstractions or debating Kantian (Kant 1999 [1781]) or Hegelian (Hegel 1977 [1807]) notions of reason, but rather spend one’s time actively pursuing ways to better humankind—to improve the lot of others and by doing so elevating the purpose of science overall.

The Scottish moral philosophers’ efforts toward understanding morality were rooted in sentiments such as sympathy and the notion of the “impartial spectator” (Reynolds 2003). Adam Smith (2000 [1759]) claimed that each were fundamental social processes in his theory of moral sentiments. Sympathy was seen as a rudimentary emotion which assists actors in taking the role of the other. Morality depends on sympathy because it triggers an actor’s need to attend to others who are suffering in their proximity. Sympathy
allows an actor to feel badly while witnessing the suffering of another, motivating pro-social or helping behavior. For Smith, without the capacity to feel emotions toward the plight of others, no moral order can emerge.

The impartial spectator is Adam Smith’s concept that represents an actor’s perception of others’ viewpoints (the impartial spectator foreshadows G. H. Mead’s generalized other). The impartial spectator is essentially one’s internalized mechanism of self control. Moral behavior is controlled behavior; morality thus can be understood as the behavioral boundaries that define appropriate action in all areas of life. Smith saw the impartial spectator as an important mechanism which promotes moral action. It allows an actor to call up moral expectations across situations, whether one is among others or alone. Smith’s work was theoretically based and needed empirical support, but the ideas he had concerning moral processes were important in the evolution of a science of morality, particularly in sociology and social psychology.

Concerning the pragmatists, William James (1890) spoke of morality psychologically as it relates to free-will. For James, free-will and moral behavior were intertwined because without believing in free-will, one cannot act morally (Collins 1994). Morality for James essentially reveals that free action defines human beings—morality is the mechanism that emerges to stabilize social bonds. Morality for James was always relative, and always sentient (active in one’s mind). What is good or bad must first be determined by each individual, and thus no absolute moral “truth” can exist. Morality, like truth, is simply an internalized standard by which people strive to conform (James 1891).
Other pragmatists were concerned with morality as well, such as Charles Sanders Peirce (1966) and John Dewey (1903). Efforts to understand morality in pragmatism were varied, with most emphasizing that contemplation about morals should be aimed at improving society (such as Dewey’s activism toward improving the American education system). While James and the other pragmatists were pondering notions of morality, others in sociology were doing the same.

*Early Sociological Theorizing on Morality*

While morality as a subject has been debated over the centuries, it presently has not received a lot of attention in the social sciences, particularly in sociology. Early sociologists like Comte (Lenzer 2004) and Durkheim (1965, 1973) examined facets of morality; Comte saw morality as an essential facet of the progress of science and wrote about the moral functions of the intellectual, and one of Durkheim’s major works is specifically dedicated to the subject (*Ethics and the Sociology of Morals* (1993)). The morality Auguste Comte addressed concerned both the locus of social action and the aim and overall role of sociology as a discipline. While interested in institutions such as the polity and economy Comte was more intrigued at what lied beneath such institutions, specifically the morality and spirituality in which such institutions rested upon (George 1927). For Comte sociology was more than simply a science. The development of sociology—the “queen of the sciences”—was the final step in the progression of an intellectual society (Comte and Lenzer 1975). After humankind’s logical progression toward a scientific end, Comte envisioned a moral order to be upheld by society’s intellectuals, or “sociologist priests.” While Comte’s work is generally dismissed by
contemporary sociologists because of his value orientations and dogmatic approach to the role of sociology in greater society, he was one of the first to attempt a sociological investigation of the moral order of society.

Durkheim’s work on morality is important to discuss as well. It is more focused on morality proper than Comte’s work. By his own admission, Durkheim claimed that “Of all the aspects of sociology…morality is the one to which I am attracted to by my own preference and which holds my attention before all else” (Durkheim 1993:15). He felt strongly that all his efforts in sociology were embedded in what he termed the “sociology of morals.” For Durkheim, individuals on their own are self-interested and always try to gain more resources (whatever those resources may be). This “essential truth” is called the *hedonic treadmill*, representing the fact that the more one has the more one wants. This is true because satisfactions received from accumulating resources only stimulates rather than satisfies needs (Brickman and Campbell 1971; Durkheim 1951; Haidt 2008).

Durkheim felt that moral restraint and limitations on self-interested action were imperative to develop a cohesive society. He noted that a strong moral order which constrained individual action led to happiness and satisfaction, and that—perhaps counter-intuitively—individualism and loose constraints led to an anomic society defined by desolation.

Morality is perhaps not the most obvious facet of Durkheim’s work, as most scholars address his concepts of collective consciousness, anomie, or mechanical and organic solidarity. However, Durkheim believed that to understand society one must understand its evolution and how moral norms function for the members of that society (Durkheim
In fact, he stated that his seminal publications *The Division of Labor in Society* (Durkheim 1893 (1984)) and *Suicide* (Durkheim 1951) should both be conceived as a study in the sociology of morals.

While Durkheim’s sociology of morals did not receive the same attention as his other endeavors, it did open the door for a science of morality that was both historical and empirical. Durkheim saw his sociology of morals tracing the evolution of moral ideas across the epochs of human history, identifying both the etiology and function of morality in a particular society. By discovering the causes of the moral order across societies, Durkheim believed one could identify the basic moral elements that exist for all societies.

For Durkheim, it was important that a sociology of morality be autonomous and not an applied or derived science. The sociology of morality examines a society’s mores, customs, legal prescriptions, and economic phenomena. These facets of society should be observed, analyzed, and compared. By this process the discipline can eventually move progressively toward fundamental laws which explain their existence (Durkheim 1993).

It is ironic that a contemporary sociology of morality has been relatively absent among other interests, especially since one of the discipline’s founders saw morality as so central to social life. This is surprising considering that Durkheim is still cited by sociologists of all interests and backgrounds. Nonetheless, his work provides important underpinnings regarding morality that sociologists can continue to expand on.

Other major sociologists wrote about morality but often addressed themes like ethics, virtues, or value systems which defined and differentiated social groups. For example, the “worldly asceticism” noted by Max Weber in the *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of
Capitalism (1998 [1930]) is essentially a discussion of morality, and he even uses the term “morality” many times throughout the book. Weber’s conception of worldly asceticism describes how the Protestant ethic valued avoiding pleasurable excesses in order to appear worthy of entrance to Heaven. Protestant morality was defined as a combination of ascetics and a strong work ethic; these tenets defined what was good, right, and proper for this sect of people. Weber showed that moral ideologies were influential in determining the course of history, and the affinity that existed between Protestantism and capitalism in many ways is due to a strict moral system of behavioral expectations.

Interest in moral behavior diminished a bit after the first era of great sociologists (after the mid nineteenth to early twentieth century). While a few scholars were concerned or interested in moral facets of social life, the sociology of morality did not develop systematically over time. Research was often theoretical and without empirical support, or simply not labeled as a work about morality per se. For example, Talcott Parsons’ (1991 [1951]) work on the sick role is essentially a perspective on the morality of illness, i.e. how doctors in the modern world serve as agents of social control and how they act as the main guardians of public morality (Holton and Turner 1986). Proper roles for the sick are defined by doctors, and the sick are expected to play those roles as they would other roles in their lives. For example, a sick person must acknowledge that they are sick and take steps toward recovery. The sick are removed from normal societal expectations while they are sick, but expected to resume their normal lives whence better.
It is immoral to claim sickness when one is not sick, just as it is immoral to treat the ill as if they are well.

Parson’s work on the sick role offers an interesting interpretation on the construction and maintenance of morality in the modern world. Parsons addressed morality very early in his career, as evident by a posthumously published essay entitled *A Behavioristic Conception of the Nature of Morals* (Parsons 1996) that he completed as a graduate student. Apart from these interests, his dealings with morality were mostly found in the cultural level of his AGIL scheme which defines the maintenance patterns and stabilizing force of a society, where he synthesized Durkheim’s work into his general theory of social action (Parsons 1949). This work diagrams the process by which actors come to value certain symbolic elements in society over others, creating a moral structure that defines behavioral expectations.

Apart from initial interest in things moral by the classical social theorists, a cumulative research program on the topic never developed in sociology, which is ironic considering that morality defines so much about human social organization, social action, and social psychology. Why is this? One reason is that morality is simply hard to define. Moral action is broadly swathed: one might believe donating to charities is the height of moral behavior, while another might view charity towards others as immoral because it enables a poor work ethic and hinders taking care of oneself. Paradoxes such as these are likely reasons many contemporary sociologists have not addressed issues concerning morality. But while both previous examples seem to be opposite, each is actually similar in that they both have the goal of protecting others. The means by which morality is
maintained may vary from person to person in a society, but the basic principle behind the means remains the same. This is important to consider when defending the enterprise of the sociology of morality.

After the early and mid-twentieth century efforts toward understanding morality in sociology, the study of morality diminished in favor of more practical concerns regarding social inequality and social relations based on background characteristics (such as race, gender, or religion). Other disciplines however continued to examine morality in new ways, and with greater scientific advancements came better methodological tools by which to apply the rules of the scientific method to the study of morality. Contemporary work in philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and other fields is currently investigating morality (with sociology only recently joining the cause).

**Contemporary Scholarship on Morality across the Disciplines**

A renewed interest and science of morality has emerged in fields such as philosophy (Flanagan 2009; Murphy and Brown 2007; Wong 2009), neuroscience (Greene and Haidt 2002; Sinnott-Armstrong 2008; Tancredi 2005), anthropology (Boehm 1982, 1999, 2004; Shweder et al. 1997), psychology (Prinz 2007), sociology (Hitlin 2008; Lukes 2008; Sayer 2005; Smith 2003; Stets and Carter 2006; Turner and Stets 2006), and even biology (Trivers 1971; Wright 1994). All these figures are actively researching the relationship between morality and society in some vein, and with new technologies that provide advanced knowledge of brain functions, discussions of morality are not limited to speculation on how people will behave given a hypothetical moral dilemma—moral process instead can be identified scientifically and understood in great detail. Even
considering the technological advancements which have perpetuated a sophisticated science of morality, many social scientists have failed to address morality directly, perhaps due to the lack of a systematic operational (or even a sufficient conventional) definition and understanding of what it actually is.

**Contemporary Work on Morality in Philosophy**

Some philosophers are currently examining the ontology of moral personality and how narratives in a society provide codes that reveal the self to others as virtuous and deserving moral agents (Flanagan 2009). This work emphasizes the importance of master narratives, which are shorthand codes that mark oneself or others as good or deserving members of a society. For example, a master narrative in American society regards being humble while still striving toward achievement. Moral narratives operate to insure social intercourse goes well. They define the nature of the self to others during interactions, and allow others to perceive one as morally decent and virtuous (or otherwise). Work in this area of philosophy assumes that at the core humans are self-interested agents that seek to maximize their benefits while minimizing costs (similar to rational choice perspectives in sociology). Narratives balance one’s self-interested motives with one’s need to assimilate with others in a society by providing scripts that define proper behavior.

Without narratives, or information that helps one understand proper etiquette and behavior in situations, individuals would simply behave without knowledge of how their self-interested tendencies would affect others around them. They would act toward others without any conception of how their behavior would eventually come to affect them in the long run (e.g. acting only to benefit oneself might be fruitful in the short term, but
repeated transgressions against others that only served the self would eventually cause others to cease interacting with a person). Recent work in this area seeks to combine philosophical and psychological perspectives that have long been debated in order to better understand the duality of self-interest and moral behavior toward others that has defined humankind across the eras. This work attempts to solve the classical problem in ethics regarding the tension that exists between ideals (i.e. moral narratives that define appropriate conduct) and individual psychology (i.e. self-interested motives).

Others in philosophy are seeking to explain why moral systems both across and within cultures have both commonalities and differences, emphasizing that morality is a cultural invention that functions to promote social order and cooperation. This view considers the debate between moral relativism and moral absolutism, and finds that while morality will vary across cultures in a relative sense, it must have limitations on what norms define appropriate conduct in a society to promote order. In other words, while what is considered “moral” varies from culture to culture, unrestricted moral relativism is bounded by limitations and common values all humans share (Wong 2009).

However, while many consider that a culture’s moral system is known and agreed upon by all living within the culture, differing moral dialects can, and often do operate among members of a society. Wong cites how moral systems within a culture can thus be pluralistic and relative, similar to the way moral systems are relative across cultures. Moral cultures can be likened to language; while a specific language may be used by everyone within a culture, the dialects of the language often vary considerably. Notions of what is morally proper in a society also vary across individuals in society; societies
thus have multiple “moral dialects” which define behavioral expectations and cultural values for self and others. Wong argues that competing definitions of morality within a culture are not necessarily hindering to a culture’s overall moral system. Instead, internal diversity and divisions of competing moral dialects motivate actors to reconcile conflicting definitions for what a society should value.

Others in philosophy are examining whether moral judgments can be unified or made universal. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2006, 2008) addresses multiple facets of morality to discover if moral judgments are phenomena that share common features for all individuals, and if moral judgments contain universal generalizations about the distinctive effects or nature their claims. He claims that no unified system of moral judgments exists, meaning that there is no practical example of a phenomenon that all define as moral. This conclusion is based on examining whether moral judgments are unified by their definition, content, phenomenology, brain mechanisms, and function. Citing that even the most severe types of moral behavior contain multiple avenues of interpretation, moral judgments thus cannot be unified in any known manner. For example the moral imperative to not kill or cause pain is essentially not an imperative at all since each can be seen as acceptable in given situations. Since there is no single phenomenon that always is defined in moral terms, moral judgments are therefore subjective and non-universal. In addition to Sinnott-Armstrong’s work on moral judgments in philosophy, others in anthropology are currently examining moral judgments as they related to culture. I now turn to a discussion on the current work by those in anthropology.
*Contemporary Work on Morality in Anthropology and Evolutionary Theory*

Current anthropological perspectives on morality look at the cultural psychology of moral judgments and how morality is defined by societies across cultures and across time. Anthropologists have shown that moral judgments are ubiquitous in every culture—that the social order is truly a moral order as Durkheim once posited. Additionally, anthropologists have discovered that while moral judgments are ubiquitous in every society, specific moral judgments are not necessarily *shared* by all societies (i.e. what is revered in one society can be taboo in another).

Anthropologists have begun to differentiate three facets (autonomy, community, and divinity) that together define the nature of a society’s moral system (Shweder et al. 1997). Moral *autonomy* represents how actors have preference structures of moral meanings. These preference structures vary by person and allow an actor some agency in determining what is moral for them as part of a greater society. Moral *community* refers to the structural position one holds in their community. One’s sense of community in a moral sense represents how acceptable or repugnant one’s occupation is compared to other occupations or positions in the social structure, or the “moral alignment” of the corporate groups one is a part of. Moral *divinity* represents one’s level of attachment to a divine or sacred realm.

The anthropological notion of the “Big Three” moral systems emphasizes that each system varies across cultures, and a single universal hierarchy of values or virtues simply does not exist equally for all cultures. Intense and strict moral codes that represent one culture’s moral autonomy, community, or divinity may be not be indicative of a different
culture’s moral judgments. The main position by cultural anthropologists in this vein is that the world is a moral universe which includes heterogeneous values; such diversity in morality makes it impossible to assume an ultimate morality which can subsume all moral systems. This means that while different cultures may each be defined by the Big Three moral systems, the makeup of those specific systems can be different from culture to culture. For example, doctors in contemporary American culture represent a relatively high position in the moral community; doctors take a Hippocratic Oath to protect and serve their community population. However, the role of “doctor” and the reputation of the field of medicine have not always had such a prestigious reputation in America. Physicians and the medical industry in general were viewed with distrust by most Americans until around the end of the nineteenth century, and doctors were not seen as moral exemplars until medicine became a sovereign profession in America (Starr 1982).

After considering that moral systems vary across cultures, anthropologists investigate the different elements of moral judgments that define a culture, noting that all such judgments in a society are experienced both cognitively well as emotionally. Regardless of the specific elements that define a culture’s moral judgments (which can vary across cultures), once they are defined by a culture they are seen as powerful motivators for behavior because they invoke strong feelings such as guilt and shame when they are not followed. So while what is considered moral varies from culture to culture, when something is defined as moral, be it a type of behavior or otherwise, it has the capacity to invoke moral emotions in individuals when they feel someone has transgressed against the culture’s shared expectations.
Evolutionary perspectives on morality examine the evolution of normative behavior, or how behavior has evolved biologically to be motivated by expectations about how people should behave in social settings (Joyce 2006; Kitcher 2006a, 2006b). Evolutionary perspectives on morality see morality as hard-wired into the brain—a process that has been selected on by evolution over thousands of years (Boehm 1999; Edel and Edel 2000; Turner 2000; Turner and Maryanski 2008; Turner and Stets 2005). Some see morality as a defense mechanism which emerged in higher primates, where intense selection on phenotypes and genotypes perpetuated a system of cultural symbols which increased the ability for social organization (Turner Forthcoming).

As evolved primates migrated into the dangerous African Savannah, new selection pressures caused a shift in emotional capacities. “Moral” emotions developed such as guilt, shame, righteous anger, and disappointment, which allowed mutual sanctioning of behavior. Behavior deemed selfish or harmful to the group could be signified to a transgressor through emotional displays, which both the transgressor and greater group members had the capacity to interpret similarly. Many moral emotions are negative and feel bad when experienced; early humans learned to avoid enacting behaviors linked to negative feelings, and hence a moral system evolved which defined appropriate and inappropriate conduct for all.

Morality in the evolutionary view is directly linked to the subcortical area of the brain, where humans developed the ability to place symbolic meaning on—or tag—emotions and valence them as sanctioning tools (indicators that self or others has transgressed against the well-being of the group). Evolutionary theorists understand
“morality” as a mechanism for promoting social control, self control, and maintaining well-being among members in society. Morality in the evolutionary view is essentially the mechanism that allowed evolved apes to realize a sense of solidarity among one another (as the species traditionally did not have such direct bioprogrammers for organizing around tight-knit groups and structures) (Turner Forthcoming).

Some who work in evolutionary theory have focused on Trivers’ (Trivers 1971) conception of the evolution of *reciprocal altruism*, and how harmful behavior has been selected against during the evolution of various species, including human beings. Trivers claims that humans possess both altruistic and cheating tendencies (Trivers’ conception of cheating is to not reciprocate another’s pro-social behavior when it is expected), the expressions of which are sensitive to developmental variables and the appropriate balance with the social and ecological environment. Altruistic processes are regulated by friendship, moralistic aggression, gratitude, and sympathy (among other psychological processes).

Traditional conceptions of altruism were that it was a basic mechanism in perpetuating kin-based relationships, and that humans had predisposed biases toward helping others of similar kin over others outside one’s genetic group (Hamilton 1964). Trivers showed that the benefit of human reciprocal altruism has not evolved simply to ensure the stability and function of kin groups, but to regulate individuals’ tendency to maximize benefits, or cheat others when such behavior is beneficial to an individual.
Reciprocal altruism or the idea that “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” is found in all human societies and is a crucial facet of morality. Whether altruism is found in kin groups or in corporate groups, altruism is one of the mechanisms by which a stable society is dependent on. Over time, people learned that each individual’s chance of surviving a violent world increased when people band together in groups. The selection process slowly created a pre-disposition in humans to return favors when they are given by others. The moral bases of trust found in human economic and exchange systems are largely based on reciprocal altruism and the predisposed trait of helping others when others help one.

Anthropologists and evolutionary theorists have relatively long traditions in their investigations of morality (especially anthropology). These findings are beginning to be refined and extended by neuroscientists who are currently attempting to look into the brain for answers regarding morality. I now turn to those working in neuroscience and discuss some of the cutting edge strategies being employed to understand moral behavior, moral emotions, and moral pathology—all within the brain.

**Contemporary Work on Morality in Neuroscience**

Neuroscientists (Greene et al. 2001; Koenigs et al. 2007; Moll, de Oliveira-Souza, and Zahn 2009; Raine and Yang 2006) and psychologists (Haidt 2001; Hardy 2006; Hoffman 2000; Prinz 2004) have been studying the relationships among moral judgments, moral reasoning, sentiments, and values. Neuroscientific approaches to morality seek to understand and differentiate social behavior that is orientated toward maximizing goals and minimizing costs, and social behavior motivated by complex moral
motivations. Neuroscientists are investigating how cognition and emotion interact to produce moral judgments, and how human moral capacities rely on evolutionary motivational systems that were hard wired long ago.

Recent work on moral behavior in neuroscience showed that moral behavior can be impaired when the brain suffers damage (Macmillan 2000; Moll, de Oliveira-Souza, and Zahn 2009). Damage to the frontal lobes and ventromedial/frontopolar sectors of the prefrontal cortex has been documented to cause alterations in personality and changes in moral behavior (Eslinger and Damasio 1985; Tranel, Bechera, and Denburg 2002). For example, people suffering damage to these regions often display a lack of concern or regret toward others, their altered behavior being termed an “acquired sociopathy” (Saver and Damasio 1991). Additionally, neurodegenerative disorders such as frontotemporal dementia have been linked to problems with moral cognition and behavior, including dysfunctions such as aggression and psychopathy (Bozeat et al. 2000; Kiel et al. 2004; Liu et al. 2004; Mendez et al. 2000).

Other advances have been made which link brain processes to moral action and moral emotions. For example, Moll et al. (2002) found that both the orbital/media sectors of the prefrontal cortex and the superior temporal sulcus regions of the brain impact moral appraisals. These regions are linked to social behavior and perception. Moral emotions activate the amygdale, thalamus, and upper midbrain, which in turn allow one to tag ordinary social events with moral values. This work has begun to show that morality is a product of biology as much as it is a product of culture and socialization.
Other work in neuroscience has examined mental processes at work when people decide courses of action regarding traditional moral dilemmas. One study placed subjects in a laboratory and scanned their brain activity while they made decisions about moral dilemmas and found that increased dorsolateral prefrontal cortex activity occurred in subjects when they witnessed moral violations (Greene 2005). Neuroscientists believe that such findings provide more evidence that morality is hard-wired, and potentially even genetically based. According to this perspective, pro-social tendencies are wired into brain modules, where a “moral grammar” exists that provides deep seeded information that allows humans to simply “know” that transgressing against others (i.e. harming them) is wrong.

Neuroscience is seeking new ways to understand the actual processes that play out during situations where one can choose to behave according to societal expectations or to behave in a self-interested manner. While neuroscientists readily admit that investigations into the brain to discover the locus of moral behavior cannot replace philosophical debates about what is considered moral in a society (Moll, de Oliveira-Souza, and Zahn 2009), their work is creating a new way to understand human moral processes. It is likely that many of the answers regarding morality will be found in future investigations of brain processes, such as why some parents neglect their young in favor of satisfying personal desires, why some people turn to crime, and why some choose to sacrifice themselves for the betterment of others. By isolating and identifying how the brain works regarding these and similar behavioral choices we will move toward a complete understanding of the function of human morality.
While disciplines such as philosophy, neuroscience, and anthropology have furthered a scientific understanding of morality, a general theory of moral action has not yet emerged within these fields, especially one that can account for all facets of identity, behavior, and emotions. The fact that a general, predictive theory has not emerged poses a problem for scholars of morality. Up to this point most research on morality has studied morality after its meaning structure is developed and defined in a society. This of course is a necessary step in the overall science of morality, but after a society’s moral phenomena have been deconstructed and the processes that allowed them to emerge are explained, we need a general theory that can be employed to predict exactly how one will behave and feel as they navigate through the environment. The study of morality is essentially the study of human action toward one another, i.e. what actions are considered appropriate or inappropriate depending on context.

**Contemporary Work on Morality in Psychology**

Work on morality in psychology is quite varied, with some scholars examining processes behind pro-social behavior and altruism (Batson 1998; Cialdini et al. 1997), others addressing the relationship between morality and politics (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Haidt and Graham 2007), some looking at emotions and morality (Huebner, Dwyer, and Hauser 2008; Lewis 2008), and a few concerned with the relationship between morality and identity (associated scholars and research discussed in detail below). Other research in psychology has shown how children learn what is “moral” through trial and error (by acting toward others and being sanctioned accordingly), and how morality and what is considered acceptable or unacceptable in society is socialized
into a child and enforced by significant others one becomes attached to throughout the
nascent stages of development (Bartlett 1932; Damon 1984; Keil and Wilson 2000;
Vygotsky 1935). I briefly discuss the psychological research on these areas and then
focus on psychological efforts toward understanding the moral self and moral behavior.

Work concentrating on altruism and pro-social behavior examines why people do or
do not help others, examining such phenomena as the bystander effect and how moral
reasoning serves to motivate helping. Scholars who study altruism have cited many
different reasons for why people act altruistically, including social learning models (that
emphasize the effects of rewards for helping another), tension reduction (i.e. helping
others to reduce stress felt while witnessing another’s suffering), symbolic interactionist
explanations that emphasize how norms and roles define appropriate behavior towards
others, and attributions regarding the legitimacy of the needs of others who require
assistance (Batson 1998). While not labeled as morality per se, work on altruism and pro-
social behavior overlaps considerably with literature on morality. Each addresses
behavior that serves to benefit others in the social structure. Literature on altruism though
is centered more on behavior than the mechanisms by which moral meanings or pro-
social norms emerge in a society.

Other recent work in psychology has examined the interplay between morality and
politics, specifically how and why moral judgments vary across the political spectrum
(Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009). It has been discovered that moral foundations differ
according to one’s political ideology. For example, liberals were found to rely more on
moral dimensions aligned with individuality than were conservatives. Morality for
liberals was more about fairness and reciprocity and harm vs. care than it was for conservatives. Conservatives were found to emphasize dimensions such as in-group loyalty, authority and respect, and purity and sanctity more than liberals. This work begins to examine how morality serves as a motivator that determines voting behavior and political action, and offers much to realms beyond psychology such as economics and political science.

Other work has examined the role of emotions in moral psychology. Traditional work in cognitive psychology cited emotions as the main source of moral judgments, but recent work has shown how emotions can follow moral judgments (Huebner, Dwyer, and Hauser 2008). This work on moral emotions in psychology is aligned with Hume’s (1777) classical notion of moral sentiments—that moral evaluations of action is dependent on one’s perception of whether the action is caused by internal or external elements. Emotions thus play a primary role in motivating morally relevant action, for example guilt and shame act to motivate actors to stop short of behaving immorally. This work offers compelling evidence about the role of emotions in moral behavior, challenging previous work that identifies emotions as necessary and sufficient mechanisms for making for moral judgments (Greene et al. 2004; Schnall et al. 2008). More on moral emotions is discussed in the following section on current work in sociology.

Additional work in psychology has examined morality as it relates to the self. Much of the work on the moral self in psychology follows research on the stages of moral development over the life course. This emerged with Piaget’s (1932) model that
emphasizes moral development as a learned enterprise which begins in childhood. Kohlberg’s (1981) approach then came to represent the dominate framework for understanding moral development. Moral development models emphasize how the higher ordered, abstract meanings of morality learned over the life course serve to guide moral behavior across situations. Kohlberg’s work posited that moral principles motivate moral action. People develop moral reasoning abilities as they mature, and as moral reasoning becomes more and more internalized people feel compelled to behave in ways aligned with their reasoning. The research following Piaget and Kohlberg provided an extensive understanding of the cognitive basis of morality, but lacked other facets of moral identity and moral behavior that are important to consider (such as emotions).

Critics of the moral development literature identify additional areas of inquiry which are germane to a complete understanding of morality. One of the forefront scholars who created a new interest in the area is Augusto Blasi (1984, 1995, 1999). Blasi’s work provided a foundation which many in psychology have based their work concerning morality on (Aquino et al. 2009; Aquino and Reed II 2002; Hardy 2006; Lapsley and Narvaez 2004a; Narvaez and Lapsley 2009; Reed II, Aquino, and Levy 2007). Blasi’s work shows how the moral self is cognitive and motivational (Blasi 1983). He emphasizes that moral cognition, moral development, and moral behavior develops as does the self. For Blasi, the study of moral phenomena should ultimately be aimed at understanding objectively observable moral behavior. While moral action is embedded in emotions, judgments, and decisions, moral action is primarily influenced by moral cognition (Blasi 1980). Here it is emphasized that the self guides moral behavior, not
abstract principles that exist outside an actor to determine an appropriate course of action. One’s self concept ultimately internalizes normative expectations of moral behavior, and thus comes to represent the basis by which one behaves in their environment. Internalized notions of morality become to represent one’s moral identity.

Blasi (1983) created a model to explain moral action, called the *Self Model of moral functioning*. The Self Model contains three components which together explain how moral understanding leads to moral action. The Self Model offers a powerful way to understand how the moral self influences behavior, but it is somewhat controversial and not accepted by all psychologists (Hardy and Carlo 2005). The first component in Blasi’s Self Model addresses how moral judgments involve a judgment of responsibility, where actions that are evaluated as moral are also judged as necessary and compulsory. The second component emphasizes that moral judgments of responsibility emerge from an individual’s self-concept, or their moral identity. Third, Blasi sees that individuals are inclined to act in consistent ways in order to maintain a stable sense of self. When one has a stable (or central) moral identity, it serves as a powerful motivator for moral action.

Other psychologists have followed Blasi by emphasizing that one’s identity motivates behavior toward self and others (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Hardy 2006; Reed II and Aquino 2003). In this sense, identities represent the loci of self-definitions concerning traits one may possess. Identities are one’s most essential characteristics—those elements that together form a “core” or essential self. Identities help one feel similar to others, such as a person seeing themselves as a moral person among other moral actors. Identities also
allow one to possess a sense of uniqueness (for example one may believe they are a harder worker than others and that this distinction is highly emblematic of who they are).

The psychological view of identity conceives it as a modality of the self (i.e. one of the most important components of the self). It represents oneself as a subject that is characterized by specific experiences of agency, unity, and individuality (Blasi and Glodis 1995). Identity here follows Erikson’s conception: as a psychological mechanism used to achieve a sense of individuality and to differentiate the self from others (Erikson 1946, 1950). Erikson became interested in identity after noticing psychological disturbances World War II veterans experienced after returning from the war (Kroger 2007).

Erikson noticed that the veterans’ identity processes seemed to be disrupted by the drastic change in returning to normal society, and noticed that it is in such times of disruption when one can identify how one’s identity process operates. He saw identity as a combination of motives and coping strategies that assist one in integrating into greater society (1968). Identity as is conceived by Erikson represented one’s subjective feeling of self-sameness and continuity over time. It is both a conscious and unconscious process, allowing others to recognize one’s character and ensure a predictable sense of community and social order. Erikson noted that identities are shaped by one’s biological characteristics, psychological needs, and cultural milieu. As with Erikson, Blasi and others treat experience as a core element in understanding the identity process (Blasi 1988, 1993; Blasi and Glodis 1995). This notion emphasizes that one’s self-concept evolves as one interacts with their environment. One’s core self is created though
experience and action. Experiences shape identities, and provide expectations for what to expect in the future.

One can see the differences between psychological perspectives on morality that involve identity compared to more macro level treatments of morality (such as in evolutionary theory). The focus is not on how morality developed or what a society deems as morally appropriate, but rather how individuals within a society act according to the values of their core self. Some psychological perspectives emphasize that moral knowledge motivates moral behavior (following Kohlberg). Others believe that moral knowledge is not the prime motivator for moral behavior, but the integration of that knowledge into one’s identity that is the impetus behind moral action. This trend in psychology that locates moral motivations in identity emphasizes that moral behavior is variable and agentic, and places the focus at the individual.

Another treatment of identity in psychology examines identity centrality. When an identity is central in one’s self-concept it is a prime mechanism that motivates behavior. When one has a moral identity that is central to their self-concept it represents their mental conception of their character as a decent person, e.g. as one who does not harm others. The moral identity is not an abstract depiction or average of societal meanings that exist concerning morality, but rather represents moral characteristics of an individual within a society (Blasi 1993). A person’s moral identity represents being honest, showing concern for others, and engaging in charitable behavior (Reed II, Aquino, and Levy 2007). When the moral identity is central in a person’s overall self-concept, they are more likely to behave morally in order to be responsible and to maintain self-consistency
(Lapsley and Narvaez 2004a). Behaving responsibly satisfies the desire to act on what is good or proper and being consistent helps one maintain a stable self-concept.

The psychological perspective that identities are to be viewed in terms of their centrality has not been accepted by all scholars. Hardy and Carlo (2005) note that Blasi’s and others’ conception of moral identity is unclear regarding moral behavior that is automatic and not deliberate. Moral behavior certainly does result from conscious moral reasoning, but people behave in moral ways throughout their interactions without consciously processing what they are doing. Conscious moral reasoning thus likely only occurs when one is in situations where proper moral action is unclear; otherwise one’s moral behavior is implicit and automatic.

Hardy and Carlo identify additional weaknesses in Blasi’s model, concerning the development of identities. For Blasi, the identity process does not come to motivate moral behavior until young adulthood. People rather rely on societal expectations to uphold moral principles in their motivation to behave in socially acceptable ways. This poses problems with the notion that people behave morally in order to maintain a consistent sense of self. Since identities don’t become stable until later in development, there is no sense of self to maintain, and hence Blasi’s model is weak in conceiving how moral cognition influences moral behavior at every stage of development. Third, critics of Blasi’s approach believe that Blasi has glossed over the antecedents and developmental processes that serve to create the moral identity. Blasi states that the moral identity becomes integrated into the self-concept during the development of the personality, but does not offer a detailed description of how this is so. Lastly, some
believe that Blasi’s model ignores crucial elements in his model, such as the role of emotions. Other work in psychology emphasizes the importance of emotions in identity processes (as does identity theory in sociology) (Bosma and Kunnen 2001; Burke and Stets 2009; Carlo 2006; Hoffman 2000), and incorporating emotions into explanations of moral behavior offers a more complete framework to understand moral agency.

Other psychologists have attempted to fill in the gaps of Blasi’s work by developing a social-cognitive approach to how the moral identity influences moral behavior. The social-cognitive model emphasizes that cognitive limits and bounded rationality limit human information processing, and therefore actors develop schemas or classification systems to assist in processing information. These schemas are then called upon during situations where they are applicable and are used to guide behavior; behaviors here are thus scripts that are pre-determined and invoked automatically to navigate the environment successfully.

The social-cognitive perspective is employed by Aquino and others (Aquino and Freeman 2009; Lapsley and Narvaez 2004b), and emphasizes that individuals are likely to behave morally when they have a highly centralized moral identity. When the moral identity is central to who one is it represents a core aspect of the self-concept. The more central the identity, the more accessible it will be across situations. Social-cognitive theorists refer to an identity’s accessibility as identity salience. A salient or accessible identity is likely to be active when a person finds themselves in a moral situation. Moral identity centrality is likened to chronic accessibility of one’s moral self-schema. When the moral identity salience and centrality are high they are found in one’s working self-
concept, or “self-schema.” Self schematics provide information about proper lines of action when in a situation (Markus and Kunda 1986), and one’s moral self-schema provides an individual information about how to behave in situations where one must make a moral decision.

Recent work on the social-cognitive model of moral behavior has addressed the influence of situations and moral identity centrality on moral behavior. Aquino et al. (2009) show how situational factors can either increase or decrease the accessibility of the moral identity in the overall self-concept. Factors in the environment that increase or decrease the accessibility of the moral identity correspondingly strengthen or weakens the motivation to behave morally. Additionally, one’s moral behavior is influenced by the level of moral identity centrality. When one’s moral identity is less central to one’s core self, it is less likely to influence moral behavior in a situation.

Along with situational factors that can increase or decrease the accessibility of the moral identity, alternative competing identities may be accessible in a situation to motivate behavior. The social-cognitive model recognizes that actors have multiple identities, but that one’s working self-concept only holds a few identities at any specific point in time. Some identities that may be accessible along with the moral identity may not be aligned in meaning with the moral identity, for example if one has an identity that promotes self-interest, it may serve to motivate behavior more than one’s moral identity in a situation where one has the opportunity to behave immorally to benefit oneself. This presents a problem for an individual, as competing identities that are both salient in a
situation can create psychological tension and lead to feelings of distress or negative emotions.

Self interested identities thus reduce the accessibility of the moral identity and create more possible choices one can make regarding behavior in a situation—behavior that may or may be as moral. This perspective emphasizes the way experience influences one’s behavior; experiences that connect moral behavior with one’s self interest stabilize the relevance of one’s moral identity, while experiences that are discordant with one’s self-interest serve to reduce the accessibility of the moral identity and challenge the core self.

Psychological perspectives on morality have extended our knowledge of the cognitive elements of morality and have provided a good foundation for how morality works as an identity. They do however lack a conception of the moral actor as an entity who affects and is affected by the environment. Psychological perspectives focus mostly on the actor in isolation while disregarding the fact that individuals are beings who define themselves and others socially (by taking the role of the other). Explaining morality by only focusing on the individual and not the environmental context in which an individual exists presents a problem: Individuals are embedded in a social structure, and social structural arrangements impact the individual in important ways.

The psychological perspective also does not incorporate emotions into a systematic theoretical framework for a complete understanding of moral identity and moral behavior. Work in sociology has attempted to fill in these gaps of the moral agent by applying the knowledge of the moral self in psychology to a sociological theory of action.
which incorporates identity, behavior, and emotion. I now move to a discussion on the sociological approach to the moral self and some of the contemporary research being done on the subject.

**Contemporary Work on Morality in Sociology**

Much of the work on morality in sociology is macro in focus, ignoring the agency of how morality is both created and perpetuated at the micro level. For example recent work in sociology examines values or what is considered “good,” or the manner in which traditional values persist in a culture (Inglehart and Baker 2000; Schwartz 2006). This work emphasizes how moral values are embedded in a society’s institutions and transmitted over the generations through acculturation (informal education from primary groups) and formal education. The treatment of morality focuses on moral codes that have been previously determined, but does not address how such moral codes came to be in the first place. This perspective offers much to understanding how morality operates at higher levels of analysis, but does not reveal how actors practice morality in every day encounters, and ignores the reciprocal micro-macro-micro nature of embedded social processes.

Sociologists have actively researched social processes related to morality, such as altruism and pro-social behavior (Callero, Howard, and Piliavin 1987; Cialdini et al. 1997; Piliavin 1997; Piliavin and Charng 1990) and moral emotions such as pride and shame (Scheff 1988, 2000), but sociologists generally have assumed a neutral stance toward the actor and have not directly addressed how and why human behavior is motivated by doing what is right, good, or expected by others in the environment (Taylor
1989). Many sociologists have assumed that actors simply respond to others in the environment in ways that can benefit the self and other (e.g. through economic exchange for instance), but they have not considered the overall moral system which all actors are embedded in. Because social interactions contain moral expectations that apply to all, those moral expectations are important to consider when studying how people behave. All interactions have boundaries that define appropriate behavior, and these boundaries are essentially the moral codes that have evolved within a society. Failing to consider the moral dynamics that define a social interaction can lead one to misinterpret the actual motivations that occur during interaction. Relatively few sociologists are actively engaged in what may be called a “sociology of morality,” but some scholars are contributing to this emerging field within the discipline.

To some sociologists, morality should not be conflated with religion (Hitlin 2008), but rather represents how society is a complex landscape where individuals are subject to a variety of moral messages which require judgments and choices regarding potential action. While morality and religion certainly share many of the same meaning structures regarding behavioral expectations that define appropriate conduct in a society, morality is not dependent on religion or divine belief. Morality here is simply an orientation toward what is right and wrong, or just and unjust. One’s “moral orientation” is not established by one’s own desires but rather exists apart from such desires, providing standards which guide preferences used to judge self and others (Smith 2003).

Steven Lukes (2008) is one sociologist who has examined moral diversity and moral relativism, or the differences in morality across societies and cultures. Lukes’ inter-
disciplinary approach identifies the commonalities and differences of action that is deemed moral in one society, and immoral in another. Lukes also addresses the relationship between morals and markets, specifically the harm that can come to individuals during market exchanges and how such exchanges affect the core values of a society (Lukes 1991).

Other sociological perspectives on morality concern the role of moral communities and religious contexts which shape individual’s moral attitudes. These perspectives focus on the mechanisms by which religious rituals integrate actors into groups, and how such rituals foster commitment and social ties among a society’s members by defining normative expectations. These sociologists have discovered important ties between religion and morality, revealing a “moral communities hypothesis” (Stark 1996) that predicts that religious contexts determine moral standards more than does individual levels of religiosity behavior (Bainbridge 1989; Finke and Adamczyk 2008; Jelen, O’Donnell, and Wilcox 1993; Moore and Vanneman 2003; Pettersson 1991; Regnerus 2003; Scheepers, Te Grotehuis, and Van Der Slik 2002; Stark, Doyle, and Kent 1980; Stark, Kent, and Doyle 1982). Work in this area basically has discovered that intense concentrations of religiosity influence attitudes and behaviors in a social system, and that individual religious or moral beliefs do not serve to influence them. These findings are particularly interesting when compared to the data presented in this dissertation; I will show how individual moral beliefs influence action rather than elements of the social structure.
Other sociologists examine the interplay between social movements and morality, or the processes by which moral reforms emerge (Beisel 1997; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Past work in this area addressed the emergence of moral panics that have spawned collective behavior, mostly focusing on the process by which a social movement coalesces rather than addressing the issue that serves as the impetus toward mobilization. Some sociologists though place an emphasis on understanding the reason why moral reforms emerge (the societal problems seen as immoral by those backing a movement), rather than the combinations of factors which bind people together and mobilize them for action. These sociologists use a historical-comparative methodology to understand how moral reforms emerge, by focusing on background characteristics of a group of moral reformers and comparing them to moral reform groups in the past. Current work in this area is examining the changing nature of moral reforms, specifically how what is considered a moral reform has shifted across the decades (Beisel 1992; Chauncey 2004; Luker 2006).

A few sociologists are examining morality as it relates to the family, specifically how the role of morality is underplayed in the literature concerning conflict between work and the family (Blair-Loy 2003; Gerson 2002). The work and family domain define—and constrain—action for all in a society. Each is a structured normative system, and often the expectations for each are in conflict with one another (for attention and time for instance). Those that focus on moral dimensions of the family and the workplace are reviewing past conceptions of the actor in the workplace and at home which are rationally oriented, morally neutral, and that ignore key dynamics that exist to determine behavior.
New perspectives emphasize that while traditional models of social action certainly help explain how people behave and how organizational structure determines one’s experiences both at work and at home, more can be learned by including the ideological (or moral) constraints, which serve to influence behavior and experience as well.

Other contemporary work in the sociology of morality examines how morality affects the marketplace (Healy 2006; Wherry 2008). Some of this work argues that markets are culture, meaning that markets are not solely defined by the rational model of trading resource A for resource B, but that they involve cultural norms that define appropriate conduct for how exchanges are made and what traded goods will be used for. Since markets are as defined by cultural dimensions as much as purely economic dimensions, they can be viewed as explicitly moral projects (Fourcade and Healy 2007). Markets create moral boundaries between actors and societies, and economic rules that define proper conduct in the marketplace are essentially moral imperatives. These notions reveal that market exchange is saturated with moral meanings which involve conscious efforts to categorize, normalize, and naturalize behaviors and rules that in themselves have not been treated as such in previous literature on economic exchange (e.g. basic economic principles have emphasized efficiency and productivity more than justice or social responsibility). Much of the literature on economic exchange has simply focused on the exchange as an isolated entity rather than addressed the ramifications of the exchange in the future which may indeed influence the exchange itself.

One sociological perspective on morality and markets is found in Wherry’s work. Wherry (2008) examines the sacred and the profane as it relates to the marketplace and
shows how differing conceptions of morality can affect exchange relationships, even keeping them from occurring. For example, in a study examining artisans in Thailand and Costa Rica, sales of goods involved more than simply the artisans exchanging their creations for goods or other resources. The artisans needed to know what their products would be used for, and if they did not approve of the intended use by the exchange partner they would refuse to exchange the good. Exchange relations thus involve dynamics concerning the relative value or need of specific goods for each respective trade partner, but also involve symbolic meanings that defining the purpose of the exchange and the long-term intentions of the exchanged good. The point here is that exchange relations are embedded in moral systems which greatly influence the nature of exchanges. Since markets are embedded in moral systems, and moral systems influence all levels of social action, a complete conception of how actors exchange with one another must consider the moral expectations that affect and constrain interaction.

Such findings show how important emotions are in exchange relations, providing evidence that traditional rational-choice models regarding exchange judgments are incomplete. Morality in the marketplace represents the values placed on exchanged goods, as well as the value of the culture in which the good was produced. This work follows Collins’ (2004) notion of interaction ritual chains and sees moral behavior in the marketplace emerging from ritual activities that create emotional energy between actors. This emotional energy serves to influence the manner in which people deal with one

---

5 While one should not equate morals with values, the point here is that values are embedded in a society’s moral system. Since a good can represent the hard work or beliefs of those that exist in a culture, a perceived mistreatment of an exchanged good can be interpreted as a moral transgression against the culture in which a good was produced.
another during exchanges, and how they will exchange with one another at a later point in time.

Other work regarding economic approaches to morality examine moral differentiation regarding social class, for example how the poor can be labeled as “deserving” or “undeserving” depending on public policy (Steensland 2008). This work shows how government decision making is highly determinant in defining morality, both directly and indirectly. Those in positions of power essentially have great efficacy in defining what behaviors are considered immoral for different sects in society. For example, societal definitions of welfare and public assistance for the poor often carry strong moral judgments. It is a general moral imperative in American society that one should work hard and take care of themselves (if one is indeed able to do so). When the government implements programs that are mostly applicable to the poor, those who utilize such programs come to be defined as morally deserving or undeserving by others in society (depending on others’ political ideology or others’ perception of the legitimacy of those seeking assistance). This in turn creates moral judgments that linger and come to define society’s institutions and population.

Other work in sociology examines how experiments can be used to understand aspects of morality, specifically altruism, cooperation, and indirect reciprocity (Simpson 2003; Simpson and Van Vugt 2009; Simpson and Willer 2008). Work in sociology has also begun to address how morality is “accomplished” at different levels of analysis, and how moral behavior and moral emotions relate to one’s moral identity. This research
provides the foundation and main theoretical framework for this dissertation, and is discussed in detail next.

**Morality at Different Levels of Analysis, Moral Behavior, and Moral Emotions**

While there are various definitions of morality, I conceive morality sociologically as the evaluative cultural codes that exist in a society to specify what is right or wrong, good or bad, or acceptable or unacceptable in a society (Turner and Stets 2006:544). All social phenomena can be classified as “good” or “bad” in relative terms, ranging from the most minor moral transgressions to extreme social taboos on bad side of the spectrum, and from subtle gestures of goodwill to the most extreme examples of pro-social behavior and altruistic self-sacrifice on the good.

A sociological conception of morality does not see morality as a dichotomy where one is either moral or immoral, but rather that morality varies both in intensity and degree. For example, minor moral transgressions may include actions like spitting on the sidewalk or refusing to let someone merge on the highway. Extreme immoral acts include abhorrent behavior such as murder, incest, or abandoning one’s loved ones. Each of these behaviors likely cause different behavioral and emotional responses from others.

Behavior which is most seen as most disturbing, upsetting, and damaging to the social order are those defined as most immoral; behavior that does not cause such reactions is generally considered less immoral. All behaviors toward others can be classified as moral in the sense that they affect others’ well-being, emotional state, or position in the social structure. Some behaviors simply are more impactful than others, and hence more intensely laden with moral codes. Morality thus is a combination of both cognitive and
emotional meanings which have evolved over time as a functional mechanism which serves to maintain order among all actors in a social system.

Another sociological perspective on morality shows that it exists at different levels of analysis, from micro-level interaction processes to societal expectations for behavior found at the macro-level. In keeping with Turner and Stets’ distinction and for my purposes, moral behavior is understood in terms of what is normative. Turner and Stets argue that morality is defined differently depending on the level of analysis one addresses. Moral codes decrease in their evaluative content as one moves from the most abstract (macro) definitions of morality to the most specific (micro) definitions of morality in a society. At the macro level, moral codes are called values. Values influence proper or improper behavior across situations and include such notions as personal control, individualism, and being competitive in American society (Turner Forthcoming).

Moral codes found at the meso level are called ideologies. It is at the meso level where macro level values are translated and adapted into a specific institutional domain. For example, the macro level moral code of personal control which defines a broad expectation for one’s behavior across contexts is re-defined in the meso level institution of the family. The notion of control becomes an acceptable facet of the family structure through widespread beliefs about parents having the right to control their children. “Control” at this level defines what is acceptable and appropriate for specific members within the family, and is less abstract than the moral representation of values at the higher, macro level. Control here represents a dimension of morality because it both
operates to solidify the roles of family members and to instill pro-social expectations for what constitutes a healthy family structure.

Moral codes at lower levels in the social structure are called norms, which dictate appropriate and expected behavior in face-to-face situations. It is at this level that I study moral behavior. Norms are not as heavily laden with evaluative content as are values in the larger social structure (regarding what is considered good/bad or right/wrong), but they do define appropriate lines of action which actors react to emotionally when violated. For example, when a person cheats on an exam in a specific situation or encounter, the feeling following the act of cheating may be guilt. This reaction stems from the normative, shared definition for what is considered the right behavior and what is considered the wrong behavior by all actors involved in the situation. Transgressing a norm during a social interaction reveals that one has done something wrong, something that both the self and other are aware of. Such a transgression re-frames the context of the setting, bringing the immoral act to the forefront of the situation. Actors thus must confront the violated norm and attempt to regain a sense of the normative order which all depend on to allow smooth interactions for self and others. Someone who behaves immorally toward another in an encounter may be able to restore the order of the interaction with an apology, but major transgressions at the micro level can sometimes permanently destroy the relationship between two actors, virtually ending any future interactions.

Actors’ moral behavior and moral judgments at the micro, meso, and macro levels are not purely products of cognition, and they do not emerge in isolation. Along with
cognitive aspects of morality, emotions also play a part in the moral order of a society. Emotions aroused in reference to cultural codes that contain evaluative content are *moral emotions* (Stets et al. 2008; Turner and Stets 2006:556). Generally, the moral emotions include shame, guilt, sympathy, and empathy (Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek 2007; Tangney and Dearing 2002), and to a lesser degree contempt, anger, and disgust (Rozin et al. 1999; Turner and Stets 2006). Moral emotions can be divided into four categories: self-critical emotions (shame and guilt), other critical emotions (contempt, anger, and disgust,) other suffering emotions (sympathy and empathy), and other-praising emotions (gratitude, an emotion considered by some to be a moral emotion) (Haidt 2003; Turner and Stets 2006). Moral emotions often result when the self or other has violated a cultural norm (for example, one may feel shame when others discover they have told a lie). Here the immoral behavior invokes a moral emotion which signifies that a violation to the social order has been committed. Moral emotions thus represent part of the mechanism which operates to maintain order and define normative expectations for actors in a society.

Moral emotions such as pride are experienced when actors conform to cultural codes that denote appropriate behavior. Guilt or shame are experienced when such cultural codes are violated (Turner and Stets 2006; Turner Forthcoming). Moral emotions thus serve as a mechanism to inhibit anti-social behavior, and encourage behavior that supports the social order (Tangney 1995). In identity theory moral emotions can be the result of moral identity non-verification, signifying that one has done something in the environment that is discrepant with whom they believe themselves to be as moral
persons. In this dissertation I examine the moral emotions of anger, shame, and guilt as outcome emotions which emerge from identity non-verification. I also examine happiness and sadness—primary emotions that often represent identity verification and non-verification (respectively) and which are not solely associated with moral behavior.

**The Moral Identity in Sociology**

Work in sociology has also examined the moral self, specifically the moral identity. The moral identity is a person identity in which the meanings involve sustaining the self as a good/bad entity. A person identity is one of the three types of identities as conceived in identity theory (the others being role identity and social identity, both of which are discussed later). A person identity represents the meanings one has as a unique individual; these meanings are not attached to social structural positions but rather differentiate one from others in the environment. Other types of person identities include being competitive, dominant, or controlling. Person identities are often conceived as master identities which are often active to influence behavior across situations.

Following previous work on moral identity, I conceive the moral identity as having two aspects of meaning (Stets and Carter 2006; Stets et al. 2008): (1) the concern for justice and the preservation of human rights (Kohlberg 1981) and (2) the level of caring toward others and the desire to preserve mutual relationships (Gilligan 1982). The moral identity as representative of one’s orientations toward justice and care is based on a large body of research developed over the past 20 years that finds no consistent difference by gender (Jaffee and Hyde 2000). Gender differences regarding morality have been debated over the years by psychologists, with many treating men as oriented toward justice and
women as oriented toward care. It was believed that since women were socialized to be compassionate caretakers while men were socialized to be strict and principled that men and women would have different orientations concerning care and justice. Some research supported this notion, but more current work shows that there are only negligible differences in men and women’s moral orientations.

Jaffee and Hyde’s recent meta-analysis of quantitative work on gender differences and moral orientation show that gender only accounts for approximately 15% of the variance regarding moral orientation, and therefore both men and women generally have moral orientations involving processes of justice and care. Justice and care are seen as core features of the moral identity as they simultaneously guide moral action. The moral identity is commonly understood to represent these dimensions and has been conceived this way in various research on identity and morality (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Walker and Hennig 2004). There are weaknesses in conceiving the moral identity along only these two dimensions. For example other dimensions of morality may include the respect of authority or loyalty toward others. However, justice and care have been identified as two of the most common dimensions of morality and thus they are employed in this dissertation.

As mentioned in the introduction, the moral identity is conceptualized as a master, or principle-level identity (Stets and Carter 2006). Principle-level identities represent the highest level identities in the overall hierarchy of identities (Powers 1973). Therefore the moral identity influences other identities as well as behavior which correspond to those identities. The moral identity operates across roles and within groups. Like other master
identities, the moral identity is often prominent in interactions as it is always operating to influence behavior (Burke 2004; Stets et al. 2008). The specific characteristics and measures which define the moral identity are described in the method section of this dissertation.

The Relevance of Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Morality for Sociology

The previous discussion of work on morality addresses many theoretical perspectives and areas of inquiry. While much of the work seems outside the bounds of sociology (for example, work in neuroscience deals with biological processes most sociologists are ignorant of), it is important to consider all such work as a sociologist. The field of sociology has traditionally extended the work done in other disciplines, such as economics and history. The science of morality is broad, and much work has been done on the subject. Sociologists must understand what different perspectives exist concerning morality before venturing into their own investigations of how morality is embedded in social structures. In other words, much of the ground work has been done by others outside the field of sociology. It is up to the sociologist to consider this work when theorizing on any facet of morality.

The most relevant research for this dissertation is found in psychology, specifically that work that examines facets of the moral self. However, since the moral identity is posited to be embedded in an individual’s greater social environment, it is important to consider things like culture and moral relativism that may influence the meanings of one’s moral identity. This dissertation is mostly concerned with how morality operates for individuals in terms of their identity, but in order to conceive how the moral identity
process operates one must consider the greater social environment in which moral
meanings are embedded. Work in anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and other
disciplines helps the sociologist understand what exactly morality is; it is up to the
sociologist to then understand how actors behave and feel as moral individuals. This can
be accomplished by examining their moral identity processes.
CHAPTER 4: METHOD

Overview

To investigate the contextual factors of identity activation and group membership as they relate to the moral identity, moral behavior, and negative and moral emotions, individuals participated in a two-part study. In Part 1, participants completed an online survey which measured their moral identity and background characteristics. One month following survey administration, these same individuals participated in Part 2: a laboratory study. Participants were told that the laboratory study involved a decision-making task which measured their cognitive ability. Participants were informed that I wanted to learn more about the background of the decision-makers by having them complete a survey. They were told that I was interested in how participants think about themselves and how they make decisions when confronted with different situations. In reality, the survey was constructed to collect baseline data on participants’ global or retrospective perceptions of themselves as moral persons, on average, and this was linked to their behavior regarding a specific situation laced with moral codes that was simulated in the laboratory several weeks later.

The laboratory study was a 2x3 design. The moral identity was activated or not activated, and participants engaged in the task alone (the individual condition), in a group (the group condition), or in a group where the members pressured the participant to act immorally (the group pressure condition). In all conditions, they were told that the better they did on the task, the more points they would receive. They were also informed that
they would receive lottery tickets to be used toward winning a monetary lottery (participants were informed that five students (or each member of a group depending on condition) would each win $50). They understood that the more points they received, the more lottery tickets they could accrue toward winning the lottery. During the task, they were awarded more points than they deserved. The measure of acting morally or immorally involved whether participants admitted that they were over-scored. The manipulation of the contextual factors, i.e. the individual, group, and group pressure conditions is discussed below in Part 2 of the study.

Details of the research design for the survey and laboratory study are discussed next, followed by a discussion of the sample used in the study. Study measures and coding of the variables is presented at the end of the methods section.

**Research Design**

*Part 1: The Survey*

The survey was administered online, approximately one month before the laboratory study began. The time lag was implemented between completion of the survey and participation in the laboratory study to ensure that participants did not associate Part 1 and Part 2 of the study with each other. To measure the meaning of the moral identity, participants were asked to reflect upon how they saw themselves given 12 bipolar characteristics: honest/dishonest, caring/uncaring, unkind/kind, unfair/fair, helpful/not helpful, stingy/generous, compassionate/hardhearted, untruthful/truthful, not hardworking/hardworking, friendly/unfriendly, selfish/selfless, and principled/unprincipled. Participants were to consider each characteristic and report how
they saw themselves by identifying where they would place themselves between each bipolar characteristic. Responses ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 reflected agreement with one bipolar characteristic, 5 reflected agreement with the other bipolar characteristic, and 3 was neutral between the two bipolar characteristics.

These items represent the “justice” and “care” facets of the moral identity, two dimensions recent research has identified as characteristics that represent aspects of morality (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Walker and Hennig 2004). I do not claim that justice and care represent the only dimensions of morality, but that they represent those characteristics that are aligned in meaning with my working definition of morality: that morality represents what is considered appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong, or good or bad in a society. The justice dimension represents the maintenance of fairness and equality for all in society, and the caring dimension represents the maintenance of actors’ well-being in society. The meanings associated with justice and care correspond to these general notions of good and bad. The items caring/uncaring, unkind/kind, helpful/not helpful, stingy/generous, compassionate/hardhearted, friendly/unfriendly, and selfish/selfless measured dimensions of care. The items honest/dishonest, unfair/fair, untruthful/truthful, hardworking/hardworking, selfish/selfless, and principled/unprincipled measured dimensions of justice. For example, those who believe that self and others should receive equal treatment in society would likely see themselves as honest, selfless, and fair. Those who believe that others’ well-being is important to maintain would likely see themselves as kind, helpful, and compassionate.
The bi-polar design of measuring self-meanings of the moral identity is consistent with the way self-meanings of any identity are measured in identity theory (Burke and Tully 1977; Reitzes and Burke 1980; Stets and Biga 2003; Stets and Burke 1996). Since the focal point in responding to the characteristics is the person rather than a role one holds or a group to which one is a member, this measurement procedure is consistent with how the moral identity is conceptualized: as a person identity. Table 1 presents a principal components factor analysis for participants’ moral identity measure. The factor analysis shows that the moral identity characteristics form a single factor structure (Eigenvalue=4.41), and that it is fairly reliable (omega reliability=.89).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truthful</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principled</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Eigenvalue    | 4.41          |
| Omega         | .89           |
**Part 2: The Laboratory Study**

The second part of the study was an experiment designed to simulate an actual situation laced with moral codes, i.e. an opportunity to act *morally* or *immorally*. The laboratory study also was conducted to investigate how the moral identity operates in such a situation for actors when it is salient to the situation (activated) or not salient to the situation (not activated). Additionally, the study measured whether such processes operate similarly for individuals when they are alone, when they are part of a group, or when they are part of a group where other group members pressure them to act immorally. The lab study was also created to measure an act of *omission*, or not doing a good act. Identity theory has previously examined acts of commission, i.e. actively engaging in a behavior (in the case of moral behavior, “doing a bad thing”). This study examines an act of omission, or omitting behavior (in the case of moral behavior, “not doing a good thing”). Acts of omission are important to study concerning identity processes because it is possible that people behave differently when they omit proper behavior as opposed to committing a moral transgression. More on acts of omission and commission is discussed in chapter 5. Data from the survey (Part 1) were linked to data from the laboratory study (Part 2) to measure how the moral identity operates for individuals across social contexts. A detailed account of the sequence of the study is provided in the Appendix.

**Moral Identity Activation**

The moral identity was activated for half the participants in the study. Across conditions, 171 students were given the moral identity activation protocol; 172 students
were given the non-moral identity activation protocol. Following others (Aquino et al. 2007), a supraliminal priming technique was employed to activate the moral identity. In supraliminal or “conscious” priming, a participant is exposed to the priming stimuli (here, the moral identity characteristics) as part of a conscious task. A manipulation check was conducted to ensure the true intention of the moral activation manipulation was not evident to participants. Participants were probed at the end of the experiment and during debriefing to discover if they knew the true nature of the study. No participants identified the true nature of the supraliminal identity activation technique used in the study.

Moral identity activation/non-activation was disguised in a “handwriting activity” that involved three stages: writing the moral identity characteristics on a sheet of paper several times, writing a short story using the moral identity characteristics, and a manipulation check to measure whether the activation worked successfully. The manipulation check measured whether the participants with moral identity activation saw themselves as more of a moral person in the short story than the non-moral identity activated participants. Specifically, after arriving at the lab, participants were taken to a room where a laboratory assistant explained the nature of the handwriting task. The laboratory assistant first gave the participant a sheet of paper in which each moral identity characteristic was listed. Next to each characteristic were four blank cells across the sheet. The laboratory assistant told the participant that the task was designed to examine people’s handwriting styles as they think about the kind of person they are. Participants

---

6 Supraliminal priming was used as it has been found to produce stronger priming effects than another common priming technique, subliminal priming. While supraliminal priming techniques do have stronger effects, there is a greater risk to participants discovering the true nature of the priming technique (Bargh and Chartrand 2000).
were instructed to write each characteristic four times in the blank cells next to the characteristic using their natural handwriting. By writing each characteristic four times, participants were forced to be exposed to the moral identity characteristics for an extended time.

Participants in the non-moral identity activation condition were asked to write alternative, positively valenced characteristics which were relatively devoid of moral content compared to the moral identity items, and hence not expected to activate a moral self-schema to the same degree as the moral identity items. The items in the non-moral identity prime condition included *carefree, compatible, favorable, generally, happy, harmless, open-minded, respectable,* and *polite* (Aquino et al. 2007).

On a second page, participants were instructed to take a few moments to think about each identity characteristic they wrote four times. They then were instructed to write a brief story about themselves (in one or two paragraphs) using each word at least once. This facilitated participants directly applying the moral identity/non-moral identity characteristics they were exposed to. Having the participant use the words in a story about themselves allowed participants to be exposed to the actual self-meanings they attributed to the moral identity characteristics.

After writing the short story, on a third sheet of paper, participants were asked to indicate how much their story reflected how they saw themselves as 1) a student, 2) a member of an organization, 3) a moral person, and 4) safety conscious. Response categories ranged from “to some extent” to “a great extent” (coded 1-7) (Aquino et al. 2007:389). The student, organization, and safety measure were used to mask the true
measure of interest, the moral person measure. A t-test was conducted to assess the
effectiveness of the moral identity priming technique. Results showed that participants in
the moral identity activation condition rated themselves significantly higher on being a
moral person (M=5.71, SD=1.18) than participants in the non-moral identity activation
condition (M=5.34, SD=1.49, t = -2.58). This indicates that the identity activation
manipulation succeeded in increasing the salience of the moral identity for half the
sample.

**Individual Laboratory Condition**

One hundred fifteen (115) students participated in the individual condition; 57 were
exposed to the moral identity activation and 58 were exposed to non-moral identity
activation. After completing the “handwriting activity,” participants were instructed that
the next part of the study was about cognitive reasoning, specifically, how well people
can logically make decisions concerning a scenario where they must survive in a harsh
environment. They were told that the task they were about to embark on was a decision-
making task which was originally administered to students 20 years ago. They were
informed that the researcher in the current study was interested in comparing the ability
of students today in performing the task to students’ abilities 20 years ago. Participants
were told that the comparison of students’ performance over time would provide insight
into how well the educational system was fostering good cognitive skills in students. The
participants were informed that only their final scores were of interest, and in collecting
everyone’s final scores the current students’ distribution of scores could be compared
with the distribution of students’ scores 20 years ago.
To ensure face validity of the cover story, the decision-making laboratory task was a derivation of NASA’s “Lost on the Moon” activity, which participants completed on a computer. “Lost on the Moon” is a common decision-making task used in previous research (Shelly and Munroe 1999; Shelly and Troyer 2001a, 2001b; Shelly et al. 1999; Shelly and Webster 1997). During the task, participants were to imagine a situation where, as a member of a space expedition, their space ship crashed on the moon, leaving them stranded from a rendezvous point with a mother ship 200 miles away.

Participants were told that when they landed, everything was damaged except for 15 items: 1) a box of matches, 2) food concentrate, 3) 50 feet of rope, 4) parachute silk, 5) a solar-powered portable heater, 6) two .45 caliber pistols, 7) one case of dehydrated milk, 8) two 100-pound tanks of oxygen, 9) a stellar map of the moon’s constellations, 10) a self-inflating life raft, 11) a magnetic compass, 12) 5 gallons of water, 13) signal flares, 14) a first-aid kit containing injection needles, and 15) a solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter.

They were informed that their crew’s survival depended on reaching the rendezvous point and that only the most crucial items should be selected in making the 200-mile journey. All 15 items could be ranked in relation to each other regarding their relative importance for surviving a journey across the moon, i.e. there was a logical “correct” sequence to ranking these items as some were more crucial to survival than others (for example, oxygen is most crucial and should be ranked first, while the matches were useless and should be ranked last).⁷

---

⁷ NASA scientists determined the correct ranking sequence when creating the activity.
The original Lost on the Moon activity was altered slightly for this study to better fit the research design and to measure identity processes and omission behavior across social contexts. Rather than having participants rank all 15 items simultaneously, 12 multiple choice questions were constructed which asked participants to rank subsets of the 15 items (four items at a time). Each question asked the participant to decide which of the presented four items (relative to each other) were most crucial for surviving a journey across the moon. An example is provided below:

Which of the following is most important for your journey across the moon?

1. A first-aid kit containing injection needles
2. 50 feet of nylon rope
3. Five gallons of water
4. Food concentrate

The correct answer for this question is 3: Five gallons of water. Each question was worth 10 points.

After describing the Lost on the Moon task to the participants, the laboratory assistant told them that the study researcher wanted to extend appreciation to them for coming to the lab to carry out the decision-making task. The laboratory assistant informed participants that in addition to the one lottery ticket they were given for participating, four additional tickets would also be entered into the lottery for them, increasing their chances of winning the lottery. However, they were instructed that if their total score was low relative to how other students did on the activity, some of these raffle tickets would

---

8 The original “Lost on the Moon” activity involved asking participants to think about and rank the items from 1 to 15 in terms of the sequence they believed to be correct. A participant’s score was determined by how closely their rankings match NASA’s rankings.

9 A pretest was conducted on 101 students in winter 2008 to ensure the 12 final multiple choice questions were adequate in terms of clarity and difficulty.
be taken away. They were told that if they didn’t score above average (compared to how others scored on the task), two lottery tickets would be taken away from them.

Additionally, if they didn’t score at least average (again, compared to others in the study), two more lottery tickets would be taken away, or a total of four tickets. Thus, it was the interest of the participants to do well on the task. At the end of the study participants were informed that in reality everyone would receive one raffle ticket.

The laboratory assistant then told participants that the specific details of the task would be explained to them as they went along. Next, after asking them if they had any questions, the laboratory assistant gave participants a review sheet which contained questions regarding the lottery, i.e. how many tickets they would lose if they didn’t do as well as others. This ensured that participants understood how and why they could lose some of their lottery tickets. The participants were asked to complete the review sheet in front of the laboratory assistant so that the assistant could correct the participants and review any unclear items. In short, this was done to ensure participants understood the incentive structure which served as a temptation to behave immorally during the experiment.

While the computer provided the participants a running score total after each question, it is possible that participants could have been inattentive to the information on the screen by anticipating the next question. To avoid this potential problem, a worksheet was given to participants after they completed the review sheet and before they begun the

---

10 This script was modified slightly for participants in the group and group pressure conditions to fit the context of the situation. The group condition script informed participants that two tickets would be taken away if their group didn’t do better than the other group, and that two additional tickets would be taken away if their group did not at least tie the other group.
activity which allowed them to record their score as they progressed through each question. The worksheet was actually administered as a way to compare their scoring with the computer’s scoring to ensure participants noticed they were being over-scored during the activity, though this was not disclosed.

Finally, the laboratory assistant explained that the “Lost on the Moon program” was 20 years old and that the study researchers were still working to update it. Participants were instructed that if they saw any errors in the program they were to explain the nature of the error on the computer before they left. This provided a means of noting the over-score error during the exam.

The participants then carried out the “Lost on the Moon” task. While completing the multiple choice questions participants were over-scored 30 points at three intervals (after answering Questions 3, 8, and 11). Thus, an extra 90 points were given to participants during the course of the exam that they did not earn. Of interest here is whether they reported the over-scoring at the end of the exam when they were asked whether they noticed any errors in the program. Participants expected a score ranging from 0-120, but with the added over-scoring manipulation the actual score range was 90-210. Participant’s final scores were displayed by the computer after they finished the program, with information regarding how many questions they got correct and a reminder that each question was worth 10 points.

At the end of the activity, the computer prompted participants to review their worksheet and make sure it was filled out completely. Participants were asked follow up questions at the end of the computer program, including open-ended response questions
to measure whether they admitted being over-scored. Participants were asked if they noticed any errors in the program, such as scoring problems, unclear questions, or confusing formatting. They were given an opportunity to describe the nature of the error in detail by typing a passage into the computer. This information was then coded for content, with any mention of being over-scored being recorded as moral behavior. If the participant did not admit they received more points than they deserved it was recorded as immoral behavior. After participants finished answering follow up questions including their emotions and reflected appraisals of how moral they thought others would see them in the situation, they were debriefed and informed of the true nature of the study.

Group and Group Pressure Laboratory Conditions

One hundred nine individuals participated in the group condition. Fifty five were exposed to moral identity activation and 54 were exposed to non-moral identity activation. One hundred nineteen students participated in the group pressure condition. Fifty nine were exposed to moral identity activation and 60 were exposed to non-moral identity activation. For both the group and group pressure conditions, the cover story for the individual condition was used, with the following alterations. To establish a group atmosphere, participants in the group condition were told that the decision-making task they were to do was the same task that was given to groups of students 20 years ago (rather than individuals), and that the researcher was interested in comparing the success of groups today to the success of groups a decade earlier. The participants were also told that the researcher was only interested in groups’ final scores on the task.
Participants in the group/group pressure conditions were told they would be working with two other individuals on the “Lost on the Moon” activity. Participants were part of a three person group called “Lunar Expedition Alpha” and were assigned a specific unit number. The laboratory assistant provided the participant with a name tag with the group’s name and unit number which they wore throughout the task. The laboratory assistant informed each participant that their two other group members were at other computer stations. Each group member would complete the task and their combined score would be compared with another three-person group (called “Command Squadron Omega”) who would be doing the task at the same time in another location. All group members other than the participant were computer generated actors. The participant was the only real person in the experiment.

The group names, unit numbers, and nametags were used for two reasons. First, they served to ensure participants believed the cover story of being part of a real group. Second, I wanted to create a sense of in-group membership for the participant concerning the other members of “Lunar Expedition Alpha” and to simultaneously invoke an out-group dynamic for the competition, “Command Squadron Omega.” This strategy follows research in social identity theory which finds that actors tend to favor in-groups and devalue out-groups (Hogg 2006; Stets and Burke 2000; Tajfel and Turner 1985).

---

11 A manipulation check was conducted on the computer program and during debriefing after the experiment to ensure participants believed they were part of a real group and not aware that the other members of Lunar Expedition Alpha and Command Squadron Omega were computer generated. Participants provided open-ended responses concerning what they thought the study was about? A laboratory assistant also probed the participant during debriefing to discover if they were suspicious about the validity of the group cover story. Less than 3% of the sample reported being suspicious about the other members of their group or their competing group.
The procedure for losing lottery tickets differed slightly in the group conditions, as an in-group/out-group dynamic would not be invoked by simply competing against participants’ average scores. For the group/group pressure conditions, lottery tickets would be taken away from them depending on how their group scored compared to the group they were competing against. For example, if they didn’t do better than the other group, two tickets would be taken away from them. And, if they didn’t at least tie the other group, two more tickets would be taken. Rather than losing tickets for doing worse than average, individuals in the group and group pressure conditions were only concerned with the score of “Command Squadron Omega.” Thus, participants knew that their three-person group needed a higher combined score than their competing three-person groups’ combined score to ensure they did not lose any lottery tickets. As with the individual condition, after the experiment participants were informed that they were only receiving one raffle ticket and that everyone had an equal chance of winning the lottery.

Next, the laboratory assistant gave participants a review sheet similar to the one used in the individual condition but specific to the group conditions regarding the manner tickets were taken away. This ensured that participants were aware of what group they belonged to and what group they were competing against, as well as how the lottery worked. The worksheet for recording points used in the individual protocol was used in the group conditions as well.

Before beginning the “Lost on the Moon” task, the computer informed participants that they should take a moment and introduce themselves to their teammates, the other members of Lunar Expedition Alpha. The computer first revealed that each group
member would be referred to by letter (A, B, and C) to keep everyone’s identity confidential. Group members A and C were computer generated; participants were always group member B. Two rounds of introduction then ensued where participants had an opportunity to tell other group members about themselves, such as where they were from, what their major was, and what they liked to do in their spare time. The messages from the computer generated actors were written in a vernacular common to college undergraduates so they would seem real. After the last message was displayed participants were instructed to begin the “Lost on the Moon” task. The task was identical as described in the individual condition. After completing the task, the computer instructed the participant that the scores would be determined for each group.

Each group member’s score was determined from an equation using the participants’ actual scores on the Lost on the Moon task as a baseline. Group member A’s score was always 20 points higher than participants’ scores (B); group member C’s score was always 60 points lower than participants’ scores. Each Command Squadron Omega group member always scored 10 fewer points than each member of Lunar Expedition Alpha, respectively (e.g. if Lunar Expedition Alpha’s combined score = 440, Command Squadron Omega’s combined score = 410). Regardless of how well or poorly participants did on the task, their group always won. Participants realized that the reason they won was due to a computer malfunction as the amount of points over-scored was higher than the difference between the competing groups’ scores.

After the scores were presented, participants were again allowed to send and receive messages from their group members. Participants were instructed that they could discuss
the task and how their group did with one another. As with the initial messages, messages from the computer generated actors were pre-written. The messages differed for the group and group pressure conditions. In the group condition the messages were written to show excitement about winning but did not contain information or meanings which would persuade participants to act immorally. The group pressure messages contained text which pressured participants to act immorally, i.e. not tell anyone about the over-scoring so that the team would not lose their lottery tickets.

**Sample**

343 undergraduate students were sampled from an introductory sociology course at a large southwestern university. Students were given course credit for participating, and 88% of enrolled students participated in the study. The sample consisted of more women (57%) than men (43%). Forty percent were freshman, 41% were sophomores, 12% were juniors, and 7% were seniors. The average age of the students was 19 years old. Racial background was diverse, reflecting the general population of the area. Most were Asian (30%), Latino/Chicano (29%), and White (17%). A minority were Black (6%) and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (3%). Some reported being bi-racial (8%) and others reported being some “other” race (8%). The participants’ reported religion was primarily Catholic (33%) or Christian (31%). Other religions included Buddhist (6%), Muslim (3%), Protestant (2%), Hindu (1%), and Other (4%). Twenty one percent reported having no religion. The average income of participants’ parents was between $35,000 and $49,000. Less than half (41%) of the sample reported being employed when they participated in the study. These demographic variables are similar to the overall population
characteristics that define the student body of the university in which the study was conducted.\textsuperscript{12}

**Measures and Coding**

**Moral Identity**

The survey items representing the moral identity include honest/dishonest, caring/uncaring, unkind/kind, unfair/fair, helpful/not helpful, stingy/generous, compassionate/hardhearted, untruthful/truthful, not hardworking/hardworking, friendly/unfriendly, selfish/selfless, and principled/unprincipled. The response categories ranged from 1 (e.g. very unkind) to 5 (e.g. very kind). The items were reversed coded and summed so that a higher value means a more positive moral identity (i.e. more caring, more principled, etc.). The variable, called *moral identity* in the analysis, was then standardized (mean = 0; standard deviation = 1).

**Moral Identity Activation**

The variable representing moral identity activation is called *activation*. 0 means the moral identity was not activated; 1 means the moral identity was activated for the person in the sample.

**Social Context**

Two dummy variables were created to test the effects of the three conditions on the identity processes so that the individual condition was the reference category by which

\textsuperscript{12} The actual distribution of the student population at the university used for the sample is as follows: women 52%; men 48%, average age = 21, racial/ethnic breakdown = 28% Latino, 40% Asian, 17% White, 8% Black, and 7% other. 37% have parental income between $0-$46,000 and another 26% have parental income between $46,000-$93,000. Data retrieved from University of California, Riverside websites: http://www.ucr.edu/about/facts.html; http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/accountability/index.php?in=2.8&source=rv
the group and group pressure conditions were compared (these variables are referred to as group and group pressure). In the group variable, 0 = individual and group pressure conditions; 1 = group condition. In the group pressure variable, 0 = individual and group conditions; 1 = group pressure condition.

**Moral Behavior**

The variable for moral behavior represents whether a participant behaved morally or immorally in the laboratory study, i.e. whether they admitted they received more points than they or their team deserved. The variable is called behavior and is coded 0=moral behavior, 1=immoral behavior.

**Moral Identity Discrepancy**

The moral identity discrepancy variable represents the study participants’ perception of others’ meanings for their behavior in the lab situation (i.e. their reflected appraisal) compared to their moral identity standard meanings. The meanings of the reflected appraisals are compared to the identity meanings to determine the degree of difference between the two. This measure is operationalized by subtracting the reflected appraisal of how moral a subject perceived themselves to be in the situation from their moral identity standard. The greater the distance between subjects’ moral identity standard meanings and the perception of how they are seen in the situation, the greater their identity discrepancy. This method follows others who work in identity theory who have measured identity discrepancies (Burke and Stets 2009). The measure was obtained in the experiment immediately after completion of the lab study.
The reflected appraisal measure was obtained after study participants completed the lab study. Before leaving the lab, participants were asked how they thought others would rate them in the lab situation on the basis on how they behaved. Participants reported to what degree they believed others saw them as having the following characteristics: being likeable, intelligent, moral, dominant, spiritual, attractive, reliable, loving, competitive, a student, a worker, and a friend. Participants’ responses to how moral they believed others saw them in the situation serves as the reflected appraisal of the moral identity in the lab setting. The other 11 items were used to mask the true intent of the research design.

After obtaining the reflected appraisal measure, it was then standardized (mean = 0, standard deviation = 1). To create the identity discrepancy variable, the standardized reflected appraisal was subtracted from participants’ moral identity standard measure. Each value was then squared so that a departure from 0 in either a negative or positive direction represents a greater discrepancy between the moral identity standard and the reflected appraisal. The identity discrepancy measure was then standardized (mean = 0, standard deviation = 1).

**Emotions**

Two emotion measures were used in the laboratory study: a *pre-experiment* emotion survey and a *post-experiment* emotion survey. The pre-experiment emotion survey was administered to measure participants’ affective state prior to being exposed to the experimental stimuli. The post-experiment emotion survey was identical to the pre-experiment survey, but was administered to participants after completing all tasks in the laboratory study and after participants had the opportunity to admit being over-scored.
This served as a posttest of participants’ feelings and a way to determine how they felt compared to when they arrived at the lab, prior to the experimental manipulation. Identity theory predicts that actors feel negative emotions when they experience identity non-verification. Capturing baseline emotions of how participants felt when they arrived at the laboratory as well as how they felt after exposure to the experimental stimuli allows a more accurate measure of emotional outcomes vis-à-vis identity verification processes.

Previous work in identity theory has not directly measured a subject’s emotional state at different points in time. Studies in identity theory have mostly examined the emotions that result from non-verification without considering an actor’s normal, baseline emotional state. The method used in this dissertation seeks to improve the manner in which emotions are measured to provide a more accurate conception of how emotions emerge during identity non-verification. By controlling for one’s normal emotional state, we can be certain that negative emotions that emerge from identity non-verification are a result of the discrepancy and not simply a reflection of how a subject usually feels, or how they felt prior to the situation in which an identity discrepancy occurred.

Emotion data was gathered as follows: When participants arrived at the lab the pre-experiment emotion survey was administered which measured their current emotional state. These data were gathered prior to completing the “handwriting activity” and “Lost on the Moon” tasks. The survey asked them to report how happy, angry, sad, shameful, and guilty they were currently feeling. Happiness, anger and sadness are three primary emotions, and shame and guilt are secondary emotions (Turner and Stets 2005). Shame and guilt also represent the most common moral emotions (Haidt 2003; Tangney,
Struewig, and Mashek 2007; Turner and Stets 2006). The five emotions were measured from 0-9 in terms of their intensity, where 0 meant feeling the emotion “not at all” and 9 meant feeling the emotion “very intensely.”

Two emotion variables were created from the pre- and post-experiment emotion surveys to test identity and behavior processes in the laboratory. The first variable, called *emotions T1*, represents study participants’ emotional state at time 1, prior to completing the lab study. It is used as a control in the analyses. The second variable, called *emotions T2*, represents participants’ emotions at time 2 after completing the lab study. In creating both emotion variables, first, both pre- and post-experiment “happy” variables were reversed coded so that they were in the same direction as the other emotions. Next, the individual emotion variables (i.e. happy, angry, sad, shameful, and guilty) were summed so that a higher value meant the participant felt more negative emotions. Both emotion variables were then standardized (mean = 0, standard deviation = 1).
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rates of Behavior across Conditions

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the variables used in the analysis. Variables representing the moral identity, moral identity activation, identity discrepancy, and emotions were all standardized (mean = 0, standard deviation = 1). The means for the group and group pressure variables represent the proportion of the sample in these groups, with the individual condition being the reference group (32% of the sample was in the group condition, 35% was in the group pressure condition, and 33% was in the individual condition). The mean for immoral behavior shows that across all conditions, subjects behaved immorally 57% of the time.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Variables (N=343)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-2.60</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Activation</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Discrepancy</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Condition</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure Condition</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions T1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>-.84</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions T2</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-.72</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix of all variables used in the analysis. Table 3 reveals that subjects were more likely to cheat when pressured by group members than they were in the other experimental conditions ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). Here we also see that
subjects experienced less negative emotions when in the group pressure condition ($r = - .11$, $p < .05$). The moral identity was related to experiencing less negative emotions across all contexts ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$). Emotions at time 1 (emotions felt prior to the lab study) were a strong predictor of emotions felt at time 2 (emotions felt after completing the lab study) ($r = .70$, $p < .05$). Logistic regression is used to further investigate the relationship among the variables in a more systematic fashion.

Table 3. Correlations among Variables (N=342)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Moral Identity</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Identity Activation</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Behavior</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Group</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Group Pressure</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>-.50*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Identity Discrepancy</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Emotions T1</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Emotions T2</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.70*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Table 4 presents results for behavior in the laboratory study, i.e. the proportion of participants who behaved immorally in the individual, group, and group pressure conditions respectively. Concerning immoral behavior in the experiment, the data show that participants were less likely to act immorally in the individual condition than in the group or group pressure conditions. Table 4 shows that 40% of the participants in the individual condition behaved immorally, as opposed to 62% in the group condition and 67% in the group pressure condition who behaved immorally. A $t$-test showed a significant difference in behavior for the individual condition compared to the group
condition \((t=3.36)\), and for the individual condition compared to the group pressure condition \((t=4.26)\), Behavior in the group and group pressure conditions was not significantly different from one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Moral Behavior</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Moral Identity and Moral Behavior**

Most subjects reported having a relatively high moral identity, clustering at the high end of the scale. Figure 2 presents a histogram of the moral identity scores in the original 1-5 metric units. One can see from Figure 2 that most individuals rank relatively high on the scale, meaning that most have high moral identities. This finding shows that most people regard themselves as decent, moral individuals. Indeed, even those individuals who rank lowest on the moral identity scale are mostly located around the midpoint of the moral/immoral continuum. It is important to acknowledge that when the moral identity is used to predict behavior in the following analysis it is in a relative sense, meaning that those with *comparatively* higher moral identities are more likely to behave in specific way.
Table 5 presents the results of the baseline effect of the moral identity on immoral behavior across social contexts (without controlling for the interaction effect of the moral identity and group membership). Logistic regression was used to determine the effects of the moral identity on moral/immoral behavior. The reported results are presented as odds ratios, where a departure from 1 in a positive direction equals an increase of the odds in acting immorally for a one-unit change in the independent variable. When examining the relationship between the moral identity and immoral behavior, the results show that the higher a participants’ moral identity, the less likely they were to engage in immoral behavior. The odds of engaging in immoral behavior decreased 30% for each standard deviation increase in the moral identity (Odds Ratio = .70, p < .05). This finding supports hypothesis 1.
Table 5. Logistic Regression of Behavior by Moral Identity and Social Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>.70*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.89*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td></td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\(p < .05\)

To find whether activation of the moral identity was required for it to influence behavior, an interaction variable was created (moral identity*activation) and added to the model presented in Table 5. Table 6 presents the results that test the effect of moral identity activation on behavior. One can see from Table 6 that moral identity activation did not have a significant effect on predicting behavior; the interaction effect of moral identity*activation had no effect in the model. This confirms hypothesis 2: direct activation from an external stimulus was not required for the moral identity to influence behavior.

Participants were more likely to behave immorally when completing the task as part of a group (compared to completing the task alone) (hypothesis 3), and even more likely to behave immorally when part of a group whose members pressured them to behave immorally (compared to doing the task alone) (hypothesis 5). Being in the group condition increased the odds of engaging in immoral behavior by 147% (Odds Ratio = 2.47, \(p < .05\)). Being in the group pressure condition increased the odds of engaging in immoral behavior by 210% (Odds Ratio = 3.10, \(p < .05\)). These findings support
hypotheses 3 and 5. These findings are in line with what social identity theory would predict concerning behavior associated with a social identity: behavior was aimed toward benefitting the in-group.

Table 6. Logistic Regression of Behavior by Moral Identity, Moral Identity Activation, and Social Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Activation</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity*Activation</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>2.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure</td>
<td>3.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \chi^2 )</td>
<td>24.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*p < .05

To test whether individuals in the group and group pressure conditions were less likely to behave immorally when their moral identity was high, two interaction variables were created and added to the model presented in Table 5. The first interaction variable is \( \text{moral identity} \times \text{group} \) and is used to test hypothesis 4. The second interaction variable is \( \text{moral identity} \times \text{pressure} \) and is used to test hypothesis 6. Table 7 presents the results of the main model of immoral behavior (Table 5) including the interaction effects. The results showed that neither of these interaction terms was a significant predictor of moral behavior. Only being in the group condition (Odds Ratio = 2.46, \( p < .05 \)) or the group pressure condition (Odds Ratio = 3.12, \( p < .05 \)) influenced immoral behavior. Both the
moral identity and group dynamics operated separately and were not contingent on one another to influence immoral behavior. These results disconfirm hypotheses 4 and 6.

Table 7. Logistic Regression of Moral Identity and Group Condition Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Activation</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>2.46*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure</td>
<td>3.12*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity*Group</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity*Group Pressure</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>23.26*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>342</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The activation of the moral identity was not a significant predictor in any model. Thus, activation does not directly influence behavior in this setting. This supports the notion that the moral identity is a principle-level identity that operates across contexts to influence behavior and thus does not need to be activated to show its influence.

Moral Identity Discrepancy and Emotions

Table 8 shows the results for the experience of negative emotions. There were no significant results regarding the moral identity discrepancy influencing negative emotions (emotions T2). This is not as expected in identity theory and thus disconfirms hypothesis 7. The significant predictors of negative emotions were the participants’ emotional state prior to completing the lab study (emotions T1) ($\beta = .71$, $p < .05$), being in a group ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$), and group pressure ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$). Being in the group and group
pressures conditions influenced participants to feel less negative emotions (compared to those who completed the task alone). The activation of the moral identity, the moral identity standard, and behavior in the lab had no effect on the experience of negative emotions. Regardless of whether the moral identity was activated by an external source prior to the lab study, the activation did not influence study participants to feel negative emotions. Also, regardless of whether study participants’ moral identity was low or high, the moral identity did not affect the experience of negative emotions. Lastly, regardless of how one behaved in the lab study, i.e. behaved morally or immorally, such behavior did not affect how a study participant felt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. OLS Regression of Emotions T2</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Emotions T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td>β</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions T1</td>
<td>.71*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Activation</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Discrepancy</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>341</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$

**Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal some interesting things regarding identity and the social context, especially concerning the presence or absence of activated identities and the impact of groups on the experience of emotions that emerge from non-verification.
The fact that the moral identity influenced behavior across conditions regardless of activation (Table 5) supports the idea that the moral identity is a higher ordered, principle-level identity. Up until now, the specific manipulation of activating an identity has not been incorporated in most research designs, especially moral identity studies using experimental methods. The fact that the moral identity operated to influence behavior regardless of activation answers some of the questions regarding how principle-level identities operate, but it also leaves the question of how identity activation operates for different types of identities.

As mentioned previously, past work has conceived the moral identity as a higher ordered identity in one’s overall hierarchy of identities which influences both lower level identities and “program” level behavior (Stets and Carter 2006; Stets et al. 2008). This means that the moral identity is commonly invoked to influence moral behavior regardless of the setting as it is likely salient in many situations. The findings in this dissertation do indeed suggest that principle-level identities affect behavior across contexts, even when competing identities are invoked (or activated) in the situation. Even though being in a group was found to influence behavior in the lab study (participants were more likely to cheat when they were in the group conditions), the moral identity continued to operate to influence behavior as well (participants were less likely to cheat when their moral identity was high) (Table 5). Table 7 reveals that the moral identity is not contingent on situational factors (i.e. the group and group pressure conditions) to influence behavior. Because the interaction effects for moral identity and group
conditions were not significant predictors of behavior, we know that the moral identity operates individually to influence behavior.

These findings follow Power’s conception of the hierarchy of control that exists within individuals, and supports the notion that identities operate at different levels within this hierarchy. While the results of this dissertation offer evidence for how principle-level identities operate, more research needs to be done to discover the relationship between identity activation and behavior, especially concerning how different types of identities (e.g. role identities) operate across social contexts.

In addition to the findings that shed light on identity activation, we also have learned something concerning how the moral identity operates for individuals when they are in groups compared to when they are alone (see Table 5). The findings generally support what is predicted in identity theory. Even when placed in different contexts, actors sought identity verification by behaving consistent with the meanings of their moral identity. When study participants had a high moral identity, they were less likely to behave immorally, and more likely to admit that they received more points than what they deserved on the laboratory task. This is interesting when considering the extreme situation of an actor in a group whose members pressure them to behave immorally. While the group dynamics did influence how participants behaved when compared to when participants were alone, participants’ moral identity meanings influenced behavior regardless of the social context in which they were placed.

The findings in Table 5 concerning how individuals behave when they experience pressure from others to behave immorally illuminate past social psychological research
regarding group conformity and how individuals tend to conform to pressure from a numerical majority. The findings in this dissertation show that while group dynamics do influence behavior, it is also the perception of an individual’s behavior in regards to their identity which people seek to control and verify, not just their perceptions of what they look like to others regarding the specific circumstances of a situation. The results indicate that multiple identities were likely operating to influence behavior in the group contexts. The moral identity and the group-based identity both operated to influence behavior. The moral identity influenced moral behavior (i.e. admitting being over-rewarded), and the group identities influenced immoral behavior (i.e. not admitting being over-rewarded). This is not surprising, as identity theory claims that multiple identities are often active together in situations (Burke and Stets 2009). However, these findings beg the question of which identity is most salient or most influential in a situation, and which identity thus has the greatest impact on one’s behavior. For example, if one’s moral identity is more salient in a situation than one’s group based identity, it might explain why people resist peer pressure in group situations.

The results in this dissertation support for the general efficacy and robustness of identity theory as a predictor of behavior. Also, this study reveals whether identity theorists should consider aspects of social identity theory—both identity activation and in-group loyalty—in their understanding of people’s behavior and emotions in social settings that feature multiple actors. While activation did not play a role in whether the moral identity influenced behavior, future work in identity should still consider the impact of an activated identity when designing experiments or studies which attempt to
measure identity processes in a laboratory. It appears that behavior is not directly contingent on whether a principle-level identity is activated or not activated in a situation, but much more research needs to be done to investigate this notion and whether other identities may require some stimulus to activate them and thus begin to affect behavior in a situation.

Regarding emotions, the results in Table 8 are generally not as expected by identity theory. A discrepancy between participants’ moral identity and their reflected appraisal of themselves as a moral person did not cause negative emotions. What did predict emotions was being part of the group conditions. Both the group and group pressure condition reduced negative emotions experienced in the lab.

To address the lack of findings regarding emotions and moral identity discrepancy, further analysis was performed that examined how emotions at time 1 (emotions T1) may have affected, or “masked” the experience of emotions at time 2 (emotions T2). It is possible that the distributions of emotions had little variance from time 1 to time 2, or that there was a high degree of error. Using emotions T1 as a control may have affected the model presented in Table 8. Table 9 presents the same model as Table 8 (with the moral identity activation, moral identity, group and group pressure conditions, and moral identity discrepancy variables) without controlling for emotions at time 1 (i.e. the emotions T1 variable is left out of the model). One can see that even when not controlling for emotions at T1, a discrepancy between one’s moral identity and their behavior still did not predict emotions. The moral identity did become significant however: the higher one’s moral identity, the less negative emotions they felt ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$). The group
and group pressure conditions still remained as significant predictors of emotions, both operating to reduce negative emotions felt in the lab (group: $\beta = -12, p < .05$; group pressure: $\beta = -.17, p < .05$).

One’s membership in the group may have mitigated the experience of negative emotions a participant felt while struggling with the moral dilemma of admitting the over-scoring on the laboratory task. Participants in the group conditions could displace the blame concerning doing a bad thing among all members of the group, therefore tempering the experience of negative emotions. For example, if a participant was concerned that their group would be caught doing a bad thing (i.e. not revealing their group’s advantage to the lab assistant), they could always claim that they were “simply following the group” to displace blame, and thus reduce the distress. These behavioral tendencies have been documented in classic work on group conformity (Asch 1951, 1956). In the Asch studies, study subjects claimed that they simply followed the group’s norms so as not to be seen

### Table 9. OLS Regression of Emotions T2 without Controlling for Emotions T1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td></td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Activation</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pressure</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Discrepancy</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$
as deviant. Participants in this dissertation study may not have been as distressed in the group contexts as they were while completing the task alone, for those who were alone had no alternate mechanism by which to rationalize their behavior.

One might explain the lack of findings regarding the moral identity discrepancy leading to negative emotions by the conflating influence of the group conditions, i.e. that the dynamics associated with being in a group somehow tempered the feeling of negative emotions normally felt when one experiences an identity discrepancy. This is a feasible conclusion, as both being in a group and experiencing group pressure reduced negative emotions in the model presented in Table 8. To address this possibility, further analysis was performed to see if the moral identity discrepancy influenced negative emotions in only the individual condition (separate from the group effects). These results reveal whether the lack of findings regarding the moral identity discrepancy and negative emotions are due to the group effects. The results showed the same pattern as found in the main model (Table 8): the moral identity discrepancy did not influence emotions even when examining only those subjects who completed the task alone. This means that something besides the group dynamics were conflating the experience of emotions one would expect from identity non-verification.

**Negative Emotions and Acts of Omission**

It is possible that the type of moral action measured in the lab setting had something to do with the results regarding emotions. It may be that people define acts of omission differently than acts of commission, and thus behave and feel differently depending on what type of moral behavior is a potential line of action in a given situation (recall that
this study examined an act of omitted moral behavior). There is a developing literature on omission and commission and the psychological impact of omitted vs. committed behavior (Hall and Greene 1996; Ritov and Baron 1990; Royzman and Baron 2002; Schweitzer 1994). This work applies to this discussion on the differences in moral behavior that is committed compared to moral behavior that is omitted. For instance, a recent study found that people have greater regret for acts of commission in the recent past than they do for acts of omission (Leach and Plaks 2009). In this study, Leach and Plaks found that people feel worse when they make errors in judgment and act in a way that hinders themselves (i.e. they commit a behavior that disadvantages them) than when people make errors in judgment by choosing not to act (i.e. the non-action results in a disadvantage of some sort).

This was discovered when study participants read a vignette that described a game show contestant who had an opportunity to choose between two suitcases, one the contestant had in his possession and another suitcase he could switch with instead. The contestant was told that one of the suitcases contained $300,000, and that the other one only contained $5. The study participants were then asked how they believed the contestant would feel regarding two different situations where the contestant could end up selecting the $5 suitcase (one scenario where the contestant could commit to switching to the $5 suitcase and one where the contestant omitted the choice to switch to the $300,000 suitcase, each choice leading to the contestant essentially losing $299,995). Study participants claimed that the contestant would feel much more regret if he had chosen to switch to the $5 suitcase (i.e. committed a behavior) than if he would have kept
the suitcase that had $5 in it (omitted a behavior). These findings support previous work that has also discovered that people feel more pain over bad outcomes that result from a committed action than from an omitted action (Gilovich, Medvec, and Chen 1995; Gleicher et al. 1990; Kahneman and Miller 1986; Kahneman and Tversky 1982; Landman 1987).

These studies show how emotional responses can differ according to what situation an actor is in, and perhaps help explain why study participants in this dissertation study did not experience negative emotions when there was a discrepancy between their moral identity and their reflected appraisals of how they believed others saw them as a moral person. They might not have felt badly because their moral transgression was an act of omission rather than commission. Previous work in identity theory on the moral identity has shown that actors do experience negative emotions from identity discrepancies for transgressions of commission (Stets and Carter 2006) (which follows the literature on the differences in omission and commission), but more research is needed to discover what differences may exist for different types of behavior and the emotions that result in such situations.

Other work regarding omission and commission behavior has examined the differences in the way people make judgments toward others who have behaved immorally. Spranca, Minsk, and Baron (1991) found that people tend to judge the morality of actors by actors’ choices, and often rate harmful omissions as less immoral than harmful commissions. Thus, people may rationalize transgressions of omission more than those of commission, or feel that they have less of a chance of being exposed as
immoral when being caught omitting expected moral behavior. Acts of omission allow one to deflect blame, if only by claiming ignorance of any supposed wrongdoing. One may claim that they simply “didn’t realize” being over-rewarded points on the task, knowing that there is no proof otherwise that could expose them as a liar. Being caught in an act of commission is more problematic for an actor, as acts of commission require some sort of actual manipulation or alteration of the environment.

Acts of commission may entail some sort of proof that one has transgressed, while acts of omission offer an individual more ways to deny wrongdoing and deflect responsibility. This was found in previous research: acts of commission are often defined by physical movement in the environment, while acts of omission are more defined by the presence of salient alternatives, for example the fact that an actor can claim that a consequence of an omission would occur even if the actor was not present in the situation (Baron and Ritov 2004; Cushman, Young, and Hauser 2006; Spranca, Minsk, and Baron 1991).

Examples of committed moral behavior and omitted moral behavior can illustrate this. Let us compare the examples of someone cheating on a test to receive a higher score (an act of commission) and someone not telling a professor that the professor improperly graded an exam, thus giving more points than the person deserved (an act of omission). In the first example, the student must actively take steps toward altering the result of the exam. This requires some sort of disturbance in the environment, such as making a cheat sheet or copying a friend’s answers. This is overt action, which potentially can be detected by others in the environment. If a professor catches the student copying answers
during the exam, the student has few options regarding displacing the meaning of the behavior. The student can rationalize the behavior to the professor in an attempt to re-define it as something other than cheating, but the fact remains that the student committed some sort of transgression.

The example of omission is much different however. If the student’s professor realizes the error and asks the student why he or she did not alert the professor of the incorrect exam score, the student always has the option of pleading ignorance, claiming that he or she didn’t realize there was an error. Or the student may be in his or her right to rationalize that they simply didn’t do anything wrong—that it was the professor’s fault and not their own. While it is true in this example that the student knows they have received something they do not deserve, they did not actively participate in the circumstance that led to such a benefit. Acts of omission thus allow actors more alternative avenues of “escape” or rationalization so as to avoid being seen as immoral agents.

One’s moral identity may indeed influence whether one admits receiving a better grade than they deserve, but the same person may not feel as intensely bad if they are discovered acting outside the boundaries of the behavior defined by the identity. In other words, negative emotions that emerge from a moral transgression may be different when immoral behavior is omitted rather than committed. As found in the previous literature discussed previously, emotions may not be as severe when people are caught in transgressions of omission. Because people tend to feel less distress when omitting a good act (as compared to committing a bad act), identity discrepancies that occur
regarding acts of omission might cause negative emotions to a lesser degree. Identity theory presently doesn’t predict that the type of situation or type of behavior impacts the degree of emotion felt during non-verification, so a bit more needs to be discussed regarding the internal processes that might be at play here.

Since identity non-verification of any sort is predicted to cause negative emotions, why would emotions emerging from non-verification differ in degree depending not on the level of identity discrepancy but due to the setting in which the discrepancy occurs? On the face it seems outside the bounds of the theory as is currently conceived, but if we consider that settings defined by acts of omission likely offer additional choices or actions to deflect the meaning of one’s transgression, perhaps these additional choices can be regarded as tools—or resources—which can be used to maintain verification of the moral identity. This logic is somewhat similar to the way Cast and Burke (2002) conceive self-esteem: high self-esteem is a buffer, or resource people use to manage identity non-verification. Likewise with acts of omission, people have more choices for how to define non-verifying feedback, which in turn may decrease one’s experience of negative emotions. Claiming that “I didn’t realize I received more than I deserve” becomes a resource for allaying the degree of negative emotion one experiences—it is a strategy to protect the self in the situation.

Perhaps it is easier to show to others that a transgression of omitted moral behavior is not a true indicator of who one is than a transgression of committed moral behavior. It may be easy for one to convince others in the environment that they “didn’t realize” they transgressed in their omitted moral behavior, while one cannot claim such ignorance
when caught committing an immoral act. Immoral transgressions of omission are not clear indicators of behavioral meanings; immoral transgressions of commission represent meanings to others in a much more tightly defined way. This aspect of the study needs to be considered by those in future work on identity and social context. Obviously, much more research is needed before we can be certain of how emotions operate in the identity process across different social settings.

**Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory**

This dissertation has attempted to synthesize elements of identity theory and social identity theory. It has not attempted to combine them into a general theory, but rather has utilized aspects of each to understand how social context influences behavior and emotions. The main goal was to expand the theoretical power of each individual theory by considering what each has to offer regarding understanding the identity process. Identity theory has been strong in predicting both behavior and emotions that emerge in the verification process; social identity theory is strong in understanding what activates an identity and how people become attached to the groups in which they belong. Elements of both theories are fundamental to this project, but what can we learn in a greater sense from utilizing a multi-theory approach?

The first thing regards the processes by which an identity becomes activated in a situation. This is the first study in identity theory that has controlled for identity activation. Previous research has either invoked an identity, such as the worker identity (Stets 2004), or assumed an identity is active to influence behavior (like the moral identity which was originally posited as a higher order identity which is continually...
active to influence behavior). This past research did not involve experimental controls that compared subjects whose identities were activated to subjects whose identities were not activated. The current findings indicate that controlling for identity activation is not crucial when examining principle-level identities (at least for the moral identity). As mentioned before, this speaks to the general function of higher-ordered identities, because the moral identity affected behavior even when the identity was not activated.

Identity activation is an area that needs to be further researched to discover how higher ordered identities operate alongside identities which also are salient in a situation. The dissertation results are not quite as important for social identity theorists, as the findings are really more beneficial to identity theory. The strength of the results is that elements of social identity theory should continue to be employed by identity theorists, particularly when attempting to understand how groups impact identity processes.

Another benefit of this dissertation is that identity theory continues to work as general theory. The present results generally support it, especially as a predictor of behavior. It did not predict emotions as clearly as behavior (the most important predictor of emotions at time 2 was emotions at time 1), which is compelling and needs some discussion here. It might be possible that while the moral identity influenced behavior, the situation was not defined in intensive moral terms by the subjects. They may not have interpreted the setting as one laced with the same moral codes as would define a different situation (e.g. witnessing a crime, encountering someone who needs assistance, or having an opportunity to cheat on their boyfriend or girlfriend). The lab setting certainly set up a moral dilemma regarding choosing to admit or not admit receiving unearned points on
the task, but acting immorally in this dilemma may have been seen as only a minor moral transgression by study subjects. Basically, it is possible that the moral dilemma that was presented to the subjects represented only a mild moral transgression.

With that in mind, let us now consider other areas in which this study is limited. I also provide some recommendations for future research.

**Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

While the findings in this dissertation provide strong evidence that identities operate to motivate behavior across social contexts, there are limitations to consider regarding the research design and specific social contexts examined. Many of these limitations reveal that further research is needed to discover more about how social context affects identity processes and how identity theory can explain such processes. While this dissertation furthers previous work on social context as it pertains to identity theory, it really only provides a baseline which explains the elements of how identity processes operate among actors in the environment.

The first limitation regards the size of the groups used in this study. While strong results were found concerning the way the moral identity affects behavior across the settings, the findings could be different if subjects were placed in groups of different sizes. The types of groups used in this research are triads, and thus represent only the basic level of group formation. It is possible that the results regarding moral identity processes would be different if the group consisted of 5, 7, or even more people. It may be that the larger one’s group the more difficult it is to maintain one’s sense of agency and act according to one’s identity standard when it is providing meanings that are in
opposition to group expectations. This needs to be considered for both the group and
group pressure conditions.

Additionally, in this study subjects in the group pressure condition were pressured by
every group member (both others in the group). While the finding that one’s moral
identity still influences behavior when actors experience such pressure is compelling, it is
not known how the identity process operates in group situations where one does not face
a total coalition, or how combinations of majority influence one’s behavior. For example,
different results might be found in a group of 6 people where only two-thirds of the
members pressure a subject. Perhaps actors would be less likely to follow a group’s
expectations if fewer of its members pressured them to do so. However, the fact that the
moral identity did influence moral behavior in the face of total pressure from others in the
group does lead to the logical conclusion that the moral identity would continue to
influence behavior when one experiences less pressure or divided pressure from others in
a group. The moral identity should continue to influence behavior in a divided pressure
situation because the total pressure situation is the one most likely to impede the
influence of the moral identity. Since the moral identity operated to influence behavior in
the most extreme example, one would expect it to operate in other situations as well.

One would expect an individual to feel more pressure to conform to a group’s
expectations as the group increased in size, so it is not known from my research whether
one’s moral identity would continue to motivate behavior to the same degree when part
of a larger group. If we assume that an individual would be more likely to conform to
group demands the larger the group is, perhaps the explanation for behavior could be
explained by identity salience: perhaps one’s group identity becomes more salient as a
group increases in size. This might occur because one is likely to be more committed to a
social identity that is connected to many people, and identities increase in salience the
more committed one is to them. This follows Stryker’s (1980) conception of interactional
commitment: people are more committed to their identities when they have an extensive
network of people that one knows through an identity. The pressure from others would
increase the likelihood the social identity attached to the group would be the identity one
seeks to verify rather than an identity that is competing for opposite or alternative
meanings. Future research is needed to really identify what processes are operating
regarding identity verification and group pressure. The findings offer reasons to pursue
these ends.

Another limitation to this research regards the status and gender of the group
members in each setting. In this project, the other group members were of equal status to
the subject, and gender was not controlled for (the gender of the fictitious others was not
revealed to subjects). Since we know from general sociological and social psychological
literature that status and gender influence social interaction (Ridgeway and Bourg 2004;
Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Ridgeway and Walker 2001; Stets and Burke 1996), it
is important to consider what impact these variables have on identity verification
processes in different social settings.

One thing to consider is the relationship between gendered moral behavior and group
membership. For example, since females have been found to have significantly higher
moral identities than males (Carter 2005), one might expect them to be more likely to
behave morally in situations where group members pressure them to behave immorally. However, since females have lower status comparatively speaking and have been found to assume subordinate positions in group hierarchies, one might also expect them to conform more to group pressure. This presents a paradox regarding the results of the current study. Would females strive to maintain the meanings of their relatively higher moral identities, or succumb to the pressure of a group majority? More research is needed to answer this question. Additional factors to consider regarding status would be age, ethnicity, religion, and social class. Answers to these questions will help expand social psychological knowledge regarding basic group and identity processes, as they will help us understand how the different elements that exist in social settings operate in concert to influence how people behave.

The last limitation concerns the previous discussion on types of moral behavior examined in this dissertation. Again, this research examined the omission of moral action, or not doing the “right” thing in a situation. It is not clear from my research if the same results would occur if the behavior examined was one of commission, or that of doing a bad or immoral thing. Current work in identity theory is beginning to examine this, i.e. whether attachment to an in-group mitigates one’s likelihood of cheating (an act of commission) to obtain a reward when one’s moral identity is low or high.

**Additional Recommendations for Future Research**

**Alternative Identities**

This dissertation, along with previous work on the moral identity in identity theory, reveals that future research will want to consider processes regarding multiple identities
that might be simultaneously invoked along with the moral identity in a social context. Individuals’ identity hierarchies consist of multiple types of identities, including person, role, and social identities, and more than one identity can be active in any given social setting. As additional identities are activated by elements in the social structure, additional courses of action can be chosen, and the identity verification process becomes a bit more complicated. Do situational cues serve to activate specific identities more than other identities available in one’s overall identity hierarchy? Or does the moral identity continue to operate as a higher ordered identity, influencing behavior across situations and regardless of other identities which may be salient in a situation?

Let us examine a simple example in detail to reveal exactly how and why multiple identities which all seek verification can complicate our understanding of how identities influence behavior and the emotions that result from non-verification. Imagine that a student (Sally) and her best friend (Joan) are enrolled in the same college course which is highly competitive and where grades are assigned on a pure curve (i.e. students’ grades will be awarded depending on their relative ranking against one another). Sally somehow gains access to the answers for the final exam, and the answers ensure that she will do better than all other students in the class. She has multiple courses of action here, all of which are likely influenced by her moral identity and other identities as well.

Let’s assume that Sally’s most crucial choices regarding verifying identities that are salient to the situation are as follows: First, she can choose to destroy the answers (verifying her moral identity). Second, she can use the answers to gain an advantage over others in the class, including her friend Joan (verifying a self-interested identity such as
being dominant or competitive, or her student identity). Third, she can share the answers with Joan so that both can do better than others in the class (verifying her friend identity). While Sally’s moral identity is likely to be activated in this situation (perhaps motivating her to destroy the answers if her moral identity is high), the role identities of student and friend are also salient to the situation and are likely to be activated. While the moral identity, student identity, and friend identity likely share common dimensions of meaning (for example all probably include some dimension of caring, either toward self or other), each also has unique meaning structures. Sally’s student identity may value achievement, striving to receive the best grades as possible, and doing better than her cohorts. Her friend identity attached to Joan may consist of meanings aligned toward helping Joan achieve success and a general concern for Joan’s overall well-being. Here we have classic role conflict, laced with the (potentially) higher ordered motivation of verifying one’s moral identity.

It seems that all identities cannot be adequately verified in Sally’s situation: if the moral identity influences Sally to destroy the exam answers, it may be difficult for her to verify her student identity (recall that the course in this example is difficult and a high grade may not be easily attainable by traditional means). Likewise, revealing the answers to Joan nullifies the advantage Sally would have over Joan, and Sally may not as easily be able to verify her student identity which has meanings aligned with achievement and competing with her cohorts. Third, Sally’s friend identity might suffer non-verification by keeping the answers secret and selfishly using them to help verify her student identity. With all these identities competing for verification, what can Sally do? How does she
choose to behave when any course of action clearly is discrepant with one or more of her activated identities?

The relatively simple example involving Sally and Joan shows how complex identity verification can be when alternative identities are salient and active in a given social context. What do actors do when they are in social situations? Do they behave in ways that seek to verify their most salient identities? Or do contextual factors serve to motivate behavior in important ways? Previous work in identity theory has shown both processes to be true. Stryker’s original work provides strong evidence for identity salience influencing behavior (Callero 1985; Stryker and Serpe 1982). Stryker and Serpe’s (Serpe 1987; Serpe and Stryker 1987) subsequent work reveals how situational meanings affect the salience of an identity by creating boundaries or constraints which define what identity can be activated in a given setting. Additionally, one study on the moral identity showed how contextual factors that activate alternate identities (such as self-interested identities) can reduce the accessibility of the moral identity and influence people to behave toward self-interested ends rather than behave in pro-social ways (Aquino et al. 2009). Thus, scholars are beginning to understand the processes by which context influences identity, but more must be accomplished to understand how identities operate in concert when they are simultaneously active in a situation.

While the notion of multiple identities being active in a situation is not new, much more research needs to be done to examine what identity influences behavior and emotions when more than one competes to be verified. Stryker’s identity theory would predict that an identity higher in one’s identity salience hierarchy would influence
behavior. Using our example, if Sally’s moral identity indeed was higher in her identity salience hierarchy, the theory would predict that she would behave toward doing the right thing (destroying the answers) rather than choosing actions that only benefit her or actions that benefit both her and her friend Joan.

Following this example, much more needs to be done concerning the moral identity and the overall hierarchy of identities. Presently the moral identity is assumed to be a principle-level identity that influences lower level identities and programs of behavior. However, what happens when a lower ordered identity is salient in a situation and becomes activated, and the meanings in it are discrepant from the higher-ordered moral identity? The findings in this dissertation seem to indicate that both identities can simultaneously influence behavior, but further research is needed to discover if this is true for role identities as well as social identities.

While it is likely that one’s lower level identities correspond in meaning to the moral identity (as it is a higher-ordered identity which influences lower level identities), certain identities may not be as aligned in meaning as are other identities. For example, one’s role identity of soccer player might consist of meanings such as striving to win and dominating the other players on the field. These meanings are different from being caring and compassionate, and so the soccer player identity has meanings that are unique to it and different from the moral identity meanings. It is interesting to consider how the lower level identity of soccer player might influence behavior differently than the moral identity. Identity theory predicts that an invoked identity influences behavior, but because lower level identities essentially work in service of higher level identities (they are
simply a mechanism by which the higher ordered identity can achieve verification), it also is logical to expect the higher ordered identity to impact behavior as well.

In reality it is likely that meanings of higher-ordered identities correspond to most lower level identities (for example one’s moral identity likely shares meanings with being a sister, friend, or worker), but further research needs to investigate this issue in more detail. For example, perhaps Sally’s student identity is really the most salient identity for her when she finds the final exam answers, and she simply behaves in the seemingly selfish manner of keeping the answers for herself. Perhaps people have an internal mechanism that separates or compartmentalizes identities so that they do not compete for verification, similar to the way people deal with cognitive dissonance. Since it is unpleasant to feel the emotions that result from non-verification, perhaps we create verification contexts which protect against non-verification of alternative identities that logically emerge from the verification of an identity. Much more needs to be done to address these notions, but knowledge of such processes will greatly expand the power of identity theory as a general predictor of behavior emotions, and increase its robustness as a general sociological theory of social action.

**Additional Aspects of Status in Social Contexts**

In addition to considering how gender may influence the moral identity process in different social contexts (as discussed before), other aspects of status are important to consider as well. It is likely that one’s behavior is variable depending on who is present in a situation. One may behave in vastly different ways when with a peer group than they do when with an authority figure. For example, one’s peers may influence one to behave
in ways not sanctioned by the meanings of one’s moral identity. People sometimes succumb to social pressure to binge on alcohol and drugs, or to neglect personal responsibilities in order to fulfill an immediate gratification or group expectations.

Additionally, one may behave differently when with higher status others. For example, one may be less likely to speed on the freeway if they see a highway patrol car on the side of the road. The authority figure, in this example a highway patrol officer, likely serves to generate multiple processes: the first is to activate the moral identity. The police are symbolic of law and order, meanings of which are aligned with the justice dimension of the moral identity. They are thus moral exemplars (Walker and Hennig 2004) which invoke societal expectations for good behavior and which activate one’s moral identity. Seeing a patrol car also likely invokes cognitions regarding losing resources, i.e. having to pay fines for speeding. So one’s behavior of slowing down is likely to be influenced by identity processes and situational processes concerning negative ramifications of losing resources (and both are likely intertwined). Status represents a more general facet of the identity verification process, particularly resources. If one conceives higher status as a resource which assists in one’s attempt to verify an identity, it makes sense that lower status others may have more difficulty verifying who they are than higher status others because lower status others suffer from a lack of resources in situations when they are with higher status others. These factors need to be understood better in future studies that use identity theory.
Social Impact and Proximity

A third facet of the identity process that needs to be investigated regards social
distance, or the proximity of others in one’s environment during the identity verification
process. Past work in psychological social psychology has found that people’s behavior
changes depending on the degree of social impact they feel. The perceived pressure one
feels by others is a function of others’ physical proximity (as well as the difference in
status between self and others). This has been empirically supported in classic
experiments such as Milgram’s (1974) study of obedience. Applied to the moral identity,
the relative distance between an actor and a moral exemplar likely mitigates the moral
identity verification process. The general process at play here in the identity model would
regard the degree of disturbance in the environment that hinders one in their attempt to
verify an identity. When others in the environment are in close proximity, there is a
greater possibility that non-verifying meanings are directly perceived by an individual,
while when others are farther there is a greater likelihood that non-verifying feedback
would not be perceived.

For example, a student is certainly more likely to attempt to cheat off another’s test if
their professor is 100 feet away than if the professor is directly in front of them. It would
be interesting to see how the group pressure measured in this study operates differently
regarding social distance. In this study subjects were told that their group members were
in other rooms on separate computers. It would be interesting to see how social impact
would affect the moral identity process if the real group members were in the same
general proximity of the subject. Of course that situation would be even more intense for
the subject, and if the activated moral identity was still found to predict moral behavior even in the midst of the most intense social pressure, what a discovery that would be! My findings offer a compelling case to indeed test such ideas.

**Conclusion**

The main conclusion of this study is that regardless of social context, identity theory operates as a general theory to predict behavior in a situation. Future research on identity should continue to explore ways to improve our understanding of how people behave and feel in situations depending on whether their identity is activated or not, though this dissertation should illuminate quite a bit regarding identity activation and principle-level identities—principle-level identities seem to operate in a perpetual fashion to influence behavior and do not require a stimulus to activate them in a situation. We now need to discover more about whether other identities require direct activation to influence behavior, particularly lower ordered program level identities. Additionally, more research needs to be done which examines how social context influences the identity process, not just for a person and social identity (as examined here) but for role identities as well. While questions still remain regarding identity processes and social context, we have learned that incorporating social identity theory and identity theory together is a powerful way to explain how identities operate to influence how one behaves and feels across different social settings.
REFERENCES


Koenigs, Michael, Liane Young, Ralph Adolphs, Daniel Tranel, Fiery Cushman, Marc Hauser, and Antonio Damasio. 2007. "Damage to the Prefrontal Cortex Increases Utilitarian Moral Judgements." Nature 446:908-911.


161


APPENDIX

The following is a step-by-step sequence of the study methodology, listed chronologically from the beginning of the study to its completion. See Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the various parts of the study. Terms below that are italicized are variables used in the analysis.

1. Study participants completed an online survey which measured their moral identity meanings.

2. One month after completing the survey, participants arrived at a laboratory to complete the “Cognition Study,” which was the name used to disguise the true intention of the actual study.

3. Upon arriving at the lab, participants completed a survey (the pre-experiment emotion survey) that measured their present emotional state (represented by the emotion T1 variable).

4. Participants were then taken into an isolated room and instructed to complete the handwriting task that served to activate (or not activate) the moral identity. This manipulation represents the identity activation variable. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition (activation) or the other (non-activation).

5. After receiving the activation/non-activation stimulus, participants were randomly assigned to complete the “Lost on the Moon” task either alone, in a group, or in a group where computer generated actors pressured the participant to not admit to the study confederate about a computer malfunction that results in more points.
than which are actually earned (after the task was completed). These conditions are represented by the individual, group, and group pressure variables (individual is the reference category by which the group variables are compared).

6. Participants were instructed that the better they (or their group) did on the task, the better their chances were at winning $50 in a lottery (they were told that 5 study participants would eventually win the money). This served as the incentive to behave immorally (i.e. not admit being over-scored by the computer) during the experiment.

7. During the Lost on the Moon task, the computer “malfunctioned” and gave the participant (or participant’s group) more points than what was correct, giving an advantage to the participant toward winning the lottery money.

8. After completion of the Lost on the Moon task, participants were asked a series of questions. Embedded in these questions were two items: the first item measured whether the participant admitted that the computer malfunctioned giving the participant an advantage toward winning the money (i.e. the participant was given an opportunity to describe if they noticed any errors in the computer program). This action is represented by the behavior variable in the analysis. The second item measured whether the participant believed they were part of a group or not (this served as a manipulation check for the validity of the computer generated actors). Additional questions measured participants’ reflected appraisal of how moral they thought others would view them in the situation (used along with the moral identity variable to create the moral identity discrepancy variable), and
what their emotional state was at the present time (this is the post-emotion survey and is represented by the variable \textit{emotions T2}; emotions at time 2 are measured in similar fashion as described in the pre-emotion survey above).

9. In the \textit{group} and \textit{group pressure} conditions, participants were given two opportunities to chat with other group members. The first opportunity came at the beginning the Lost on the Moon task (this was done to forge a degree of in-group favoritism). The second came right after completing the Lost on the Moon task and right before completing the exit surveys that measured participants’ moral behavior, group believability, reflected appraisal of themselves as moral, and their post-experiment emotional state (\textit{emotions T2}). Because the \textit{group} and \textit{group pressure} conditions used computer generated actors, the messages that were presented to participants were pre-generated and constructed to reflect the general banter among university undergraduates which would commonly follow such an activity. The messages were thoroughly pretested to be sure they were written using appropriate colloquialisms and language commonly employed by the sample population, and the lines of communication were set so that infinite responses back and forth between group members were not possible (the participant received a message that the other group members had logged off the computer after two interchanges). In the \textit{group pressure} condition, the computer generated messages presented after the Lost on the Moon task included language that suggested that the participant not tell the research assistant about the computer malfunction.
10. After completing the exit surveys on the computer, the participant pressed a button signaling to the research assistant (in another room) that the participant had finished the task. The research assistant then debriefed the participant about the true nature of the study, had the participant sign an informed consent form stating their rights as a study participant and allowing the data to be used by the researcher, and dismissed the participant from the study.