

THE EXPRESSION OF THE SELF AND CONVERSATIONAL CONTEXT:
A PRAGMATIC THEORY OF DISCOURSE ABOUT THE SELF

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ABSTRACT

The first half of this dissertation provides a broad review and analysis of the concept of the self, the phenomenon of self-reference, and the use of metaphors in theoretical accounts of the self. The second half of the dissertation explores the role of the conversational context upon people's self-presentations of themselves, particularly the proportion of self-evaluative statements as elicited by open-ended probes for self-disquisition. Although the resurgence of interest in the study of the self has made for a greater awareness of the interpretative importance of context on a person's self-description, the implicit contextual effects of the experimenters' own choice of open-ended questions and enquiry into people's notions of themselves has not received due attention as part of a "collaborative interaction." The articulation of a person's self-concept as elicited by self-report instruments like the "Who are you?" (WAY) or "tell us about yourself" open-ended questionnaires was here found to be highly variable with respect to minor re-wording of those questions or to the imagined situation in which those same questions are asked. A key finding of this study is that one can practically reverse previous research claims that at most only 10% of the "spontaneous self" is explicitly self-evaluative. From the perspective of a Gricean or pragmatic model of discourse interpretation, it is proposed that a person's self-related constructs are always interactive and guided by prototypic scenarios of discourse relevancy. Results were supportive of the prediction that in order to determine how the experimental question should be relevantly answered, participants in a psychology experiment must resort to the inference-making strategy of drawing upon situational prototypes of comparable questions found in everyday conversations.

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I. THE CONCEPT OF THE RELATIONAL SELF

A. PREAMBLE

Not only do we experience ourselves in the world, we also endeavor to understand and give account of ourselves. The word *self*--either alone or as the first stem in over 200 hyphenated expressions like "self-abandonment," "self-abasing," "self-abhorrence," etc.--is a much-used word in the composing of such accounts and has come to stand for something we place great stock in and for the most part value highly. The established use of this word, as designating something of essential importance about ourselves, proves to be all the more singular when we are told that this same word became the kind of substantive it is today through a solecism arising from the use of the word "self" in print.

"Selfes," as, for example, in the Old English "his selfes" or "as they wished for themselves" (Davis, 1974), was simply a pronominal adjective to indicate emphatically that the reference is to "him" and not, or not merely, to some other. In talking to another, one makes reference to oneself by this interlocutory emphasis upon the speaker being the bearer, locus, or source of what is being said. This use survives in rare and ironic oblique cases, such as "Himself wants his tea." Possession or nominal identity was all that was indicated by this emphatic or reflexive function of *selfe*, as it is in today's compounds *myself*, *yourself*, and *itself*. But, as Peggy Rosenthal (1984) argues, "since the spelling was the same as if *selfes* were a genitive noun modified by *his*, *selfes* came to be seen in this case as a noun" (p. 9). What semantic weight this "spelling accident," as Rosenthal calls it, has come to possess since the 12th and 13th centuries!

Critics like Mayo (1952) point to this curious history of the word in the English-speaking world and suggest that nothing substantial but only bad grammar and logic is being designated by any reference to a *self*. We have fallen into a Rylean "category mistake" in believing there to be reference to some private substantive when only a nominal

or emphatic reference to the visible person is being made. We have made a false leap from intensives like *itself*, *oneself*, *myself*, etc., to the idea of a substantive *Self*. This argument, however, only makes mysterious and begs the question as to why the word, *Self*, has gained such wide currency and variegated form over the centuries. What is the reason behind this necessity to make such extensive self-reference and develop so many hyphenated expressions?

A great many languages clearly employ marked positional suffixes which will deal with temporal and spatial relations between the speaker and the object being spoken about. While awareness not only of one's body but also of one's social and psychic individuality, or at least one's specification (Hirst and Woolley, 1982), may well be a psychological universal, in the West the category of the self has come to serve an important role in everyday parlance, as well as in a diversity of specialized language communities, like those of psychology, law and morality. As Marcel Mauss (1935/1985) has argued, the concept of the self has evolved in the West from:

. . . a simple masquerade to the mask, from a 'role' (*personnage*) to a 'person' (*personne*), to a name, to an individual; from the latter to a being possessing metaphysical and moral value; from a moral consciousness to a sacred being; from the latter to a fundamental form of thought and action. . . . (p. 22)

Etymology as an "archaeology of thought," however, should not lead us to the glib conclusions that an experience of being a "self" simply did not exist before it was talked about, and that the notion of the self is a mere cultural fiction. While the late B. F. Skinner (1989) saw some ontological priority or behaviourist purity in an early English that makes no reference to a substantive self, one could just as well argue that a more evolved English self-consciously reflects a truer ontology or greater "recognition" of what we are.

Whatever theoretical preferences historical speculation may inspire, at the very least we can surmise that the cultural need for an articulated notion of self is evidenced by its appearance in the language. Past efforts to foretell the future teach us that we must be extremely cautious in whatever short-term predictions we make concerning the

developments, rehabilitations or even attenuations this term may undergo. For better or for worse, today's psychology has enough influence in the culture to be part of that future. This new voice of mainstream psychology notwithstanding, for most people the category of the self still assumes substantive reality and possesses structural form.

The continued, widespread use and historical development of the word is a clue that we are dealing with more than a mere accident of history, cultural vagary, or rhetorical flourish and that the word serves important semantic-cognitive needs. Of course, many psychologists have their reasons to doubt the legitimacy of those needs for self-understanding. Even granting that such needs are valid, one could still question whether they are best met by what could be the "fiction" of the self.

Theories of action make prominent the "what," "wherefore," and "why" of behaviours, but the notion of the "self" brings back the question of "who" in relation to what has been done, and the purpose for which what has been done, has been done. Human action proper is motivated and there is an "I" who has reasons, initiates actions and is held responsible for those actions. Along with the growth of reference to one's "self" there occurred an increasingly active and assertive reference to a more localized center of personal action. Dorothy Lee (1959) notes that in Chaucerian English, we find expressions like "'it reweth *me*,' 'thus dreamed *me*,' 'melikes,' and 'himlikode'; but we say now: *I* rue, *I* dream, *I* like" (p. 133). Implicit, therefore, in our everyday understanding of human action is the notion of self-determination and the interactive making of oneself in the world whose furniture includes other selves, other living beings and physical things. We exist as a totality of many things and events held together, as it were, by this self-reference to an "I," while at the same time we make our self more distinct from the situation in which it finds itself. A network of meanings between these diverse terms of self-reference makes for a coherent language game, a game which behaviourism, for example, would attempt to dissolve or ignore in the quixotic hope of remaining only with a physicalistic discourse of the external "what" of overt

behaviours. Even human motivation itself would be understood only in terms of a concatenation of public events in the world. The notion of the self can fare even more badly by simply being banished altogether, due perhaps to its resistance to reduction into something other than what it is. The everyday language of the self returns us to the private or lived world of mental events and conscious experience. This is the "substantive" reality that would necessitate talk of a "self" and make this talk about ourselves bear upon mental events, conscious experience and the narrative of a lived life. The substantive self is a "subject" not a substance, although that way of talking did serve to accent the importance of this linchpin and center of our existence. The "self" is not a substantive thing but an experiential reference in our conscious living of a life. It should not be surprising, therefore, that a philosopher of Being like Heidegger would see a conceptual relation wherein the question of the nature of "who" it is that can ask about Being, is a question belonging to the same ontological status as that of the substantive Self.

The question of the "who" answers itself in terms of the "I" itself, the 'subject', the 'Self'. The "who" is what maintains itself as something identical throughout changes in its Experiences and ways of behaviour, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in so doing. . . . Yet, man's '*substance*' is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*. (Heidegger, 1962/1927, section 25)

Rather than enter into direct debate with those who consider talk of the self bootless, I instead will take seriously this manner of discourse as it pertains particularly to the concept of "self-knowing" or self-disclosure. Charles Taylor (1991) observes that "we see ourselves as selves, because our morally important self-descriptions push us in this direction or, alternatively, because we identify ourselves with this kind of description" (p. 305). All humans define themselves in some manner and it is peculiar to our age that certain kinds of reflexivity figure importantly in our lives. One set of reflexive characterizations consists of moral or evaluative self-descriptions whereby we take our measure or locate ourselves in relation to some standards of what is achievable or desirable.

Of course, there is the danger of over-valuing this sense of ourselves, so much so that social critics like Philip Rieff (1968), Christopher Lasch (1978), and Richard Sennett (1974/1978) have rightly characterized our times as an age of the self-absorbed. As Richard Sennett (*ibid*) points out, "each person's self has become his principal burden; to know oneself has become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world" (p. 4). No doubt there is a "Western binge of inwardness" (Rieff, *ibid*, p. 204) and the bromides of "self-realization" and "self-improvement" like that of "positive thinking" are as tedious in their roseate piety as they are in their unquestioned and exaggerated efficacy to deliver us from life's difficulties and disappointments. Charles Taylor (1989) notes that this kind of emphasis upon the self as found in, say, "human potential movements" is actually a return to an earlier Romantic expressivism of the Emerson and Whitman variety dressed in a "post-Freudian psychology, but frequently (as Europeans often remark) without the tragic sense of conflict which was central to Freud" (p. 497). Wayne Dyer (1976) in one of his best selling popular psychology books tells us, for instance, that:

Only a ghost wallows around in his past, explaining himself with self-descriptors based on a life lived through. You are what you choose today, not what you've chosen before. (*ibid*, p. 82)

The Self, glorified, is an ahistorical, disembodied Self, one that is apparently autonomous even from its own personal history, social relations and material conditions. Merely change one's self-descriptors, adjust one's mental talking to oneself and one thereby effects whatever selfhood one would desire. It does not matter whether or not such self-descriptions are warranted or even believable. The view here is that self-worth comes solely from oneself, no matter what one has done or what others would experience us to be.

Such is the good news of pop psychology and its appeal is understandable in a culture that both promotes such individual hubris while at the same time demeaning individuals as mindless consumers, redundant and replaceable labour components, and mere objects for social-political manipulation. To be fair, this kind of pop psychology merely figures as one of

the more garish representations for that larger trend in contemporary culture which struggles to restore some personal meaning and affirm the role of a finite self-determined freedom against that more austere instrumental and detached rationality that also figures in our culture. Notwithstanding pop psychology's celebration of an autonomous and self-translucent Self, it is at least partly correct in opposing the equally excessive strictures of a metaphysical scientific determinism in which human subjectivity is mistrusted and the human experience of personal freedom is dismissed as a mere perceptual "illusion," as many academic psychologists have baldly declared (Imergluck, 1964; Hartmann, 1966; Lefcourt, 1973, Wescott, 1977). While it does appear that the metaphysical notion of human freedom conflicts with scientific determinism, we should still be skeptical of such long-standing philosophical issues being glibly resolved by professional decree and the human experience of personal freedom dismissed as illusory if it does not conform with the peremptory philosophical stance of psychologists intent on obtaining an ontology from what is in the end merely a methodological working assumption. By contrast, there is good reason for the larger mistrust of the veracity of human subjectivity (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), but this is not to say that knowing oneself, having a sense of oneself, and talking about oneself cannot be done either well or poorly. What people believe to be the case, rightly or wrongly, has a determinate influence on human action, and how such self-descriptions are formed is an important topic for psychological enquiry.

Central to this analysis of self-knowledge, therefore, will be a shift towards the process of discourse interpretation itself for illuminating what is involved in self-definition and self-knowledge. Our talk about ourselves as discourse thus comes to be seen not only as a speech act but as a social act, as language itself is pre-eminently a social interaction. Speech act theory helps here, I think, to bring attention away from the over-individualized, sanctified self with which modern culture is obsessed and towards the more prosaic speech situation of the "I" talking about itself to another or an Other.

It is a social-psychological given that we not only make mental representations of our own character, attributes, private experience, social roles, past experience and future expectations of ourselves, but also endeavor to warrant or give an evaluative account of ourselves, and even to catch a glimpse of ourselves. What we note about ourselves is very much dependent upon how we find ourselves relating to others and how they relate to us. The social interactionists like George Mead (1934) and Horton Cooley (1922) argued that in fact we define or know ourselves solely through our relations and interactions with others, particularly through how we believe others think about us as a result of our dealings with them. We seem to be inseparable partners in a dance of mutual self-definition. This inescapable social component of ourselves precludes knowledge of a separate self, a self existing apart from others. Yet we continue to speak as if there were a separate, substantive self that is private and alone.

There are also properties or a causal locus that we attribute to the individual alone rather than to the group or collective to which an individual belongs. The psychology of the self and theories of action meet in our talk about ourselves or even about another. Western societies place much import on the autonomy of the self, and legal, as well as everyday, attributions of individual worth and action are predicated on an ontological separation of the person from others. When we ask, "Who is that person?," it is usually a request for some individuating qualities of that particular individual whom we wish to have described. When asked, "Who left the door open?," our enquiry is commonly directed to attaching to the act the status of it being performed by some particular individual whom we wish to have identified. In both cases we are asking for some individuating identification of the other, one suitable to the purpose of our enquiry. In our first enquiry all kinds of general or specific identifying properties may be asked for, but in the second enquiry a mere causal locus constituted by an individual will suffice. When I want to know who left the door open, a mere name will do, yet such a designation of somebody by their name itself only tells us "who" did it but tells us

nothing in particular about who it is that has been named. Proper names only serve to singularize but not characterize or describe or signify on a predicative level. Very little of the self, if anything, is here of interrogative interest, only a nominal identification of "who dunnit." It is quite evident that what is asked for varies from mere nominal, impersonal identifiers like proper names or simply indexical indicators like "*he* did it," to more personal and definite descriptions. It is the latter that the psychology of the self usually seeks to elicit and understand.

Any psychology of the self still remains an interpersonal psychology, as some exchange or interlocation must occur between the person we would understand and the other that the person would disclose themselves to. The symbolic interactionists observe that the content of one's self-attributions are ultimately the internalized attributions of others as they have interacted with us. I would argue further that what we know or feel of ourselves as we are asked to relate this to another is also going to be constrained by the nature of the current perceived relationship with that other and is not merely a kind of reading off of answers from the book of one's life and character as it has been formed to the present moment. The self is still being formed and understood and consolidated even in this current interaction with another. The self disclosed to another is always going to be the "interactive self" with that other. Indeed, Paul Ricoeur (1992) goes as far as to suggest that, "every advance in the direction of the selfhood of the speaker or the agent has as its counterpart a comparable advance in the otherness of the partner" (p. 44). While the "advance in the otherness of the partner" may not be commensurate with what the speaker or our experimental participant would disclose, we nevertheless always have at hand the concrete situation of interpersonal interlocation. Of course, the other which someone may be addressing need not actually be present, as in the case of writing a diary to a potential audience. In diary-writing one reveals or records for some non-present other, which might be none other than the person himself or herself in the future. And here too one reveals not just anything at all, but ideally only what

is deemed "relevant" to the purpose envisioned for keeping such a private record in the first place, a record for one's potential "future self" as reader.

In the case of psychological research, here too there is an interactive exchange between what has been referred to as the "subject" and the researcher, even if the researcher remains invisible and "speaks" to the subject only through a questionnaire. While the term "subject" is meant only to refer to any "individual who participates in an experimental situation" (Wolman, 1973), the actual usage may connote more than what this technical definition would minimally stipulate. We can talk about the subject as one of those things acted upon under the control of the experimenter, as subjected to certain stimuli for the purpose of empirical observation, or simply as that which affords a subject-matter for psychological enquiry. An unwarranted passivity on the part of individual is here suggested. The over-emphasis upon the experimental subject as a kind of reactive "performer" tended to eclipse the dimension of the person as also being a "conscious experiencer." This was an issue often raised by phenomenological psychology (Strasser, 1963; Giorgi, 1970) and by certain personality theorists like Gordon Allport (1950). There is, of course, that additional meaning of the "subject" being a locus of thought and agency, as illustrated by one of the definitions of "subject" listed in the Oxford English Dictionary: "the thinking or cognizing agent; the self or ego." Convention and the overestimated ideal of the detached observer's not interacting with the observed, however, has no doubt entrenched the term "subject" for psychology and the connotation of a passive subject may all too often prevail, although it need not.

Even if the connotations of the experimental "subject" do imply a reactive or experiencing individual, the interactive or relational nature of oneself with others is less forthcoming. The referents for the subject-matter of psychology as behaving, thinking or experiencing "subjects" have in common this isolation of the individual self from others. In time, perhaps, a new denotation or connotation will develop with usage, one that is

commensurate with our growing appreciation of the truly relational nature of the self and its implications for the inherent non-passive, interpersonal quality of psychological research.

Some thirty years ago Alfred Schutz (1964) talked about how our relations with another always occur in some degree of "concreteness and specificity" (p. 24). He distinguishes between a "thou-orientation" and a "we-relation" where the latter involves a mutual taking of each other into account while the former involves a kind of one-sided attending to another. I would argue that while psychology may strive towards the "thou-orientation" so as to permit the subject of study to emerge independent of the researcher, this is only an ideality rarely achieved except by certain non-reactive or unobtrusive measures (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz & Sechrest, 1966). In practice and inescapably so, the psychological research of the self always takes place within a social relation. This much is obvious, but we need to go further and analyze how that relationship results in a psychology not of the "self" but of a "relational self" (Jordan, 1991). We can get some understanding of this process if we focus on the social nature of "our talk about ourselves to another" as a "speech act." But first I would like to explore a little further this talk about ourselves as it occurs in everyday exchanges. In particular, some general features of our self-talk will be elucidated, one of which is the self-evaluative dimension which will be the central focus of the experimental studies to be undertaken.

B. SELF-REFERENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF THE SELF

1. The Construction of Self-Reference in Folk Psychology

Although the potentially infinite diversity of interpersonal exchanges appears to render what one can say about oneself equally infinite, not just any exchange will do. Relevance as to what was sought or expected constrains talk about others or oneself. Clearly, when we seek to know what somebody is like or ask "who are you?" we are asking for some predicative information about the individual, even if the aim is only ostensive. We are also

asking for something that the person can tell us, and perhaps more fully than, and in some respects differently from, what others may be able to tell us about that same person. The very ideal of being able to give account of ourselves is one not open to just any determination; nor is it believed to be fully knowable by another, although the other may well be able to say something important about that person which even he or she, for whatever reason, cannot always say or know for him- or herself.

In our everyday discourse, or in so-called folk psychology, we have a shared understanding of what is meant by the commonplace prescriptions to know ourselves, be ourselves, improve ourselves, show self-control, be self-sufficient and be true to "thine own self." Failure to be so self-knowing and self-realized serves as explanation for certain lapses in conduct or personal flaws. One can be liable to charges of self-deception and self-contradiction, of being self-forgetful, self-denying or self-abasing. In current pop psychology (which we should not conflate with folk psychology in general), much of human unhappiness and life failure is blamed on a lack of self-confidence or self-assertion. Contrariwise, one can be too much with the self, as when negative attributions are made of being self-centered, self-interested or even self-absorbed, although "pop psychology" is not overly concerned about these latter failures of the self. Indeed, it is not easy to attain proper self-understanding. How are we to find the elusive and shifting quality of being self-taught but not self-opinionated, being self-possessed without self-display, evincing self-expression without self-seeking, being self-made but not self-willed, being capable of self-sacrifice but not suffering self-effacement, possessing self-feeling but not excessive self-love, being self-acquainted but not self-involved? With such a tangle of opposing ascriptions it is remarkable that the average person (unlike the average psychologist) has become neither mired in self-doubt nor tempted simply to dispense with this talk about a "self."

Of course in talking about oneself, one does not depend only upon these hyphenated self-terms. As Cooley (1902/1922) noted, what is designated in common speech by the first

person singulars of "I," "me," "my," "mine," and "myself" is also the self, or at least the "my-feeling" or sense of myself. Clearly, self-reference is variegated and can be expressed indirectly, as deemed appropriate to the context for and goals of such self-accounts to others or even to oneself. Making oneself known to a stranger may simply involve an exchange of names and some minimal information about one's social location and standing: "My name is Jane Smith and I work for the government." Depending on the relationship one foresees, or hopes to see developing with a stranger, further efforts towards "impression management" often include an expanded narrative consisting of, for example, avocational interests or some brief personal history. Reciprocal social intercourse requires that one must ensure that this making oneself known is not overdone, otherwise one might well be deemed an "egotist" who, as the humorist Ambrose Bierce once observed, is "a person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me." The use of self-terms for self-description are, therefore, to be employed in public with attention to both their warrantable "truth-value" and conversational appropriateness. It may simply be better in some situations to evince or enact the preferred self-designations rather than make direct verbal proclamations of them. Far better to "be" self-possessed than to state this about oneself, lest the very fact of stating this self-attribution belie its truth claim. By contrast, explicit self-statements are expected to be readily employed in the context of an intimate *tête-à-tête* or in a psychotherapy session. What all this suggests is that the language of self-reference follows certain conventions of "appropriate" narration.

Even the very private, innermost self-reflection may also be dependent upon the context both for the narrative framework of how it is to be carried out, as well as for the very licence to engage in this curious activity in the first place. In other cultures where the boundary between self and society is less acute, the definition of the "self" is not so individualized (Tuan, 1982; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Anthropologist Dorothy Lee (Lee, 1950/1959, p. 134) reports that when Sadie Marshe, a Wintu Indian of Northern California,

was asked for her autobiography Sadie first proceeded to narrate a story about her first husband which she herself had only heard second hand. When pressed to give just her own life story, the first three-quarters of Sadie's next narrative, that which she referred to as "my story," consisted of relating about the lives of her grandfather, mother and uncle before her own birth. Only later, when she reaches the point of "that which was in my mother's womb" does Sadie then include events that we would deem as pertaining to herself.

Tuan (1982) cites the example of the Dinka in Northern Africa for whom "all the drama and significance lie in external events; the self other than these events--these manifestations of power--is so bare of content as to be nonexistent" (p. 142). This is not to say that they don't have personal memories, experiences, dreams, and self-concerns, but these are regarded more as external events from the world at large acting upon one rather than as interior experiences of the self that are always available for reflection. But even in the West, it is mainly intellectuals, according to Turner (1975), who give protracted thought to the question, "who am I really?" To those who may pride themselves on being more practical minded, or who have little faith in indulgent self-analyses, the unexamined life seems not only worth living, but self-evidently far less troublesome than the life of self-reflection.

Notwithstanding these differences in how articulated and deliberate is a self-concept, people have some general sense of themselves, of what they are about and of what matters to them. It is from such a view of ourselves, garnered from our sedimented experience of ourselves, that we are able to rapidly assess and make judgements as to how any specific other may be both different from, and in certain respects the same as ourselves. This is not to say that such judgements are always correct (Shrauger and Shoeneman, 1979) or without systematic bias (Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky, 1982); nor need we assume the old introspectionist doctrine that such knowledge is obtained by an immediate, visual-like perception of some inner, closeted self, waiting to be fully disclosed if one wishes to look.

William Lyons (1986) makes a good case against the old notion of an introspected "self" and instead proposes that over time we arrive at "something reasonably continuous and coherent in the biographical sense and something reasonably consistent and integral in the logicopsychological sense" (p. 142). This constructed view of ourselves is developed from what we know and remember of ourselves in the world, and the evaluative appraisal of this self is informed by what we think and feel we should be like. Beyond the effort to achieve a consistent and coherent view of ourselves, we also worry whether the "self" we maintain is "healthy." During other periods of Western history (Baumeister, 1987), qualities like virtue, honor, sincerity, or self-reliance, rather than "health" were the predominant issues for self-evaluation.

If we again turn to what could be seen as prototypical self-referencing as marked by the free use of hyphenated self-terms, there are some characteristics pertinent to the narrative function of this everyday discourse about the self. For instance, there is the thematic, explanatory, evaluative and ontic import of this discourse. The evaluative aspect will be the component of our self-talk chosen for experimental manipulation.

table 1

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-DISOURSE

	INTENTIONAL AIM	RESULTANT MEANINGS
DESCRIPTIVE IMPORT	towards the general or abstract outline	upshot, theme, motif
EXPLANATORY IMPORT	compossibility, probability or necessity	reasons, not causes
EVALUATIVE IMPORT	self-evaluation	normative location of oneself
ONTIC SIGNIFICATION	self-definition	contextual self-attributions

a. Descriptive import

First, while everyday discourse of the self may be prompted by the immediate situation, one's moods in that situation, and certain concerns about one's personality or behaviour, the intentional meaning of this discourse in the West tends to be inclined towards the general or abstract. Mere statistical generalizations are not suggested, however, since an atypical or even single behaviour may be seen as "representative" or as a signification of what is deemed to be an essential aspect of the self. When this is the case, then discourse of the self clearly intends to direct attention away from the details of what is said to more global notions of outline, upshot, theme, or motif. The general sense of oneself is to be understood or delineated by illustration with particulars. Now, if we follow through on the notion that natural discourse is not a grammatical object but rather a social action, then, as with any other social action, we need to make reference to the social practices and situated conventions that serve to define and evaluate social acts. With respect to the overall orientation and meaning of our talk about ourselves, we would expect certain global organizations beyond any particular sentence or even sequence of sentences to help inform what might be meant by such particular self-statements. To use Teun Van Dijk's (1977; 1978; 1985) term, there are "semantic macrostructures," which are not only inadequately accounted for by local coherence at the microlevel of the sentence, but which in fact provide a necessary condition for such local coherences. We could say that the thematic and summary meanings provided by this discourse of the self as it occurs in a specific context serve as a kind of "macroproposition" which interpretatively organizes a polysemy of behaviours, a diversity of situated actions, and even a host of seemingly disparate thoughts, emotions and moods.

b. Explanatory import

Second, discourse of the self can serve not merely as descriptive, but also as explanatory. "Why," someone might ask, "do you refuse to accept their help?" and in turn someone proffers the explanation, "because I am self-reliant." Without more information we cannot rule out the possibility that this statement was intended as ironical and that therefore we have an evasion of the question rather than an answer satisfying the request for an explanation. One must know more about the person and situation. Our query is answered or partly answered if we can establish that the statement does sincerely express an avowed self-attribution. Such an explanation of one's actions in terms of reasons now stands or falls by how it is deemed to be logically related to what it purports to achieve or justify (Peters, 1960; Harré & Secord, 1972). Refusing unnecessary help would exemplify or instantiate self-reliance. If one's purpose, for instance, is rationally or logically supported by one's actions, then that purpose can serve to "explain" those actions in the manner of an "in order to" kind of motive (Schutz, 1964). Such accounts in terms of reasons or purposes may thus contain either moral or practical justification which serves as a suitable answer. Hence, "questions, for instance, can be raised about the conventions in accordance with which a man acts or which determine his goals" (Peters, p. 16). The important consideration here is that this kind of explanation serves to warrant the action by giving a reason or rationale that is believed to be relevantly or rationally at issue with the actors concerned.

Also, when the rationality and execution of one's acts are "one's own," to use Robert Young's (1980) characterization of self-determination, we arrive at a model of human agency in which our actions are conditioned in some important respects by these global interpretations and representations of ourselves in a world in which we are held responsible for our actions.

A source of confusion that bedevils psychology is that either an explanation by reasons or a causal story could be suggested by this kind of talk about motives or

characterological qualities. Is the refusal of help the means employed to realize, at least for the moment, the goal of self-reliance, or is the refusal of help itself the effect of an end state? The speaker may have intended a causal account, and if not, the hearer is free to impose one. To thicken matters further, causal stories can indeed count as the reason for an action, but we need to remember that they are not the only reasons. Hence, before we can conclude that we now have in hand from somebody's self-account a sufficient explanation in terms of causes or reasons, we first have to determine from the context of discourse which kind of explanation is being proffered, or is warranted, or is most applicable.

c. Ontic significations

A third characteristic that can be observed of the ascriptions we apply to ourselves is that such ascriptions serve to define the kind of persons we are. It is tempting to explain self-attributions wholly in terms of their service to a social praxis whereby it may be deemed valuable to contrast and equate one's person with respect to specific others or an ideal standard. When it is asserted that "I'm a lazy sod," more seems to be entailed than simply a set of social comparisons like that of Pat being more assiduous than Terry. Rather, it is more frequently the case that these attributions to the self will be felt to strike deep to the core of what we are, if not to the very awareness *that* we are. Even the extreme Cartesian suspension of belief still leaves us at the very least with the minimal self-concern of a self-doubting being. Consideration of this reflexive defining of ourselves in order to be a self is an important problem in contemporary thought (Bernstein, 1978), and one that some theorists have believed differentiates the social sciences from the physical sciences (Taylor, 1970). Indeed, it has also been argued that psychology has not yet fully grasped the implications of the view that we are self-interpreting creatures, and that our interpretations constitute what we are as human beings (Bernstein, 1978; Taylor, 1976). Given the view that human beings are fundamentally self-defining beings, the images and metaphors of what it is

to be a person as forwarded by psychology are not insignificant in their consequences for our self-definitions, especially when they become widely accepted. Indeed, the gnawing sense of human beings not being at home in the world (Heidegger, 1926/1962) may well be a consequence of this subjectivity of being a self, one that receives and questions itself, makes decisions for itself and, with a sense of agency, sees itself actively seeking either to preserve or to change its ways of life.

d. Evaluative import

The fourth and final characteristic of our talk about ourselves is that it can be highly evaluative and that this evaluative activity serves to locate individual experience and conduct normatively. Taking one's measure according to general standards of living and personhood may well be a cultural universal (Marsella, DeVos & Hsu, 1985), although no doubt the particular normative standards by which such a measure is taken are guided by the prevailing psychological models offered by a culture (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Girst and Woolley, 1982). On this last point, it is humbling to consider that as of yet no formal model from psychology has been accepted at large as providing anything near what is perceived to be the comprehensive scope and personal relevance of what we can refer to as "folk psychology." This is not to say that certain psychologies don't have their influence upon the culture (Rieff, 1966), as evidenced by the adoption of such terms as "projection," "complex," "ego," "libido," "conditioning," and "feedback" into the common parlance. Nor can we attribute the modest influence of psychology to a failure to provide an evaluative or normative service for the locating of self with others. Nevertheless, the terms and concepts introduced by psychology often do not gain wide currency and everyday immediacy. It has been argued that folk psychology, as shared in the general culture and in the manifest distinctions and subtle shades of our ordinary language, possesses a great conceptual (Stich, 1983) and even predictive power (Smedslund, 1988), and that this can be seen as due to the

long history and collective effort behind its making (Peters, 1960). Also, the relevant knowledge base of the short-term and uncommonly situated psychology experiment may not provide for the kind of inference-making possibilities that are derived from the intelligent layperson's longer and personally varied experience in natural situations (Joynson, 1974).

We need not, however, expect components of our discourse about ourselves, like the evaluative import, to appear always in every self-report, or to be openly present in the same manner to the same degree. It is not proper or apposite, for instance, to offer to another a detailed self-evaluation of one's physical and mental health on being asked by an acquaintance, "how are you today?" Garfinkel (1967) helped to identify the underlying presence of such tacit rules of conversational "accountability" and the importance we give to their observance, by having his assistants intentionally and directly violate such rules. While it is not often proper and may be rare to offer detailed or intimate self-evaluation, we could do so, since there do exist in our culture certain stereotypical situations where self-evaluations we might deem as personal disclosures are encouraged. They figure prominently in, say, a psychotherapy session or an intimate *tête-à-tête* with a close friend. A lover who might say, "I'm only truly happy in your presence," is not simply reporting matter-of-factly upon a feeling, as would be the case if he or she noted that, "this morning I woke up with a feeling of dizziness." We have here also a self-evaluation of the importance or strength of enchantment and attachment that the other has for one as indexed by this concurrence of happiness being felt when the other is present.

In his recent work on the social rationality of emotion, Ronald de Sousa (1987) refers to what he calls "paradigm scenarios" in which our everyday emotional repertoire in various situations is learned, often in early childhood. As de Sousa argues, we

are made familiar with the vocabulary of emotion by association with *paradigm scenarios*. These are drawn first from our daily life as small children, later reinforced by the stories, art, and culture to which we are exposed. Later still in literate cultures, they are supplemented and refined by literature. (ibid, p. 182)

Hence, it is in the context of such culturally defined scenarios that our basic instinctive emotional responses to certain stimuli become a component of what we define as a particular emotion. Similarly, we may speculate that our self talk is also patterned upon and defined by certain paradigm scenarios where what may well be certain basic needs for conceptual generality, explanatory understanding, and self-definition via self-evaluation, become a part of, or indeed characteristic of, our talk about ourselves. In comparison with our categories and playing out of emotions, however, our public reflections upon ourselves are going to be more deeply patterned by everyday rules of conversational discourse. The expressiveness of emotion allows for a greater violation of conversational politeness than does self-talk.

The use of evaluative attributions to effect some ontic signification of ourselves might suggest that they must possess a distinctive relation to facts about ourselves in being true or false. But if one's self-definition is multifaceted, situated and always in the process of being formed, then within the range of possible self-attributions none may possess a unique or stable truth value across all conceivable situations. After all, what we say is true or false about ourselves can be possible and legitimate ascriptions for certain purposes. The conversational context of assessment for our self-evaluations pertains to such things as the appropriateness, satisfactoriness, and warrantability of making such self-evaluations for the situation in which they are expressed. Is one stating a falsehood about oneself if one says that "I'm an alcoholic" but omits the fact that one has drunk no alcohol in the past 10 years? In an AA meeting, this would be judged a truthful self-evaluation, but for a survey questionnaire it would be wrong. The touchstone for self-evaluation changes across situations and so does, quite possibly, the significance of a self-evaluation for self-definition.

2. The Self in Academic Psychology and the Plurality of Self-concepts

The context of discourse makes variable the appearance and manner of expression of the thematic, explanatory, evaluative and ontic significations in our talk about the self. It

might be expected that all four aspects would provide a useful starting place for further analysis and study. Instead, three of these general characteristics, the thematic, explanatory and self-defining import of our language of the self, have not been duly emphasized by psychologists, in large part due to the discomfort felt over introducing a hermeneutic understanding of unifying themes, an explicit reference to mental causality, and an explicit ontology of the person. Instead, psychology has for the most part given attention to the third characteristic of the concept of the self as being evaluative and as serving social interaction. In light of the pervasive and long-standing functionalist perspective in North American psychology, in which mentation is seen as an activity best understood in terms of its observable functions or behavioural utilities, it is understandable why those characteristics of the self less amenable to measurement and cross-classification with behaviour would tend to be ignored. Nevertheless, even as the evaluative facet of our self-talk was elaborated upon and voluminously researched (Wylie, 1979), these other aspects of our self-talk could not be completely neglected. Recent writings on the concept of the self demonstrate less hesitancy in discussing them (Hales, 1985).

In even a cursory sketch of some of the prominent junctures in our contemporary psychology of the self, one cannot ignore the diverse flavours of what has come to be referred to as the "social constructionist" view of the self. An early rendition of this view, to put it simply, is that the self (or an important component thereof) is the interpersonally determined and malleable synthesis of what we know about how others have perceived and reacted to us, and subsequently might perceive and react to us. Given this account, advanced by the early symbolic interactionists like Cooley (1922) and Mead (1934), we may well ask what would be the point of preserving and continuing in one's self-concept and self-feeling, thoughts about, and appraisals of ourselves as perceived, inferred and imagined in the minds of others. One answer, given by Mead, was that this activity serves as an essential and necessary social process which culminates in the goings-on of self-reflexivity (Mead, 1934). We are

ineluctably social beings in that our very notion of being an individual self is socially constituted. Society, composed of distributed individual selves, is in turn constituted by those selves. Mead thus makes the claim that individual selves and society are co-constituted. Mead lays most emphasis, however, upon the social production of individual selves.

Whatever might be the role of facts about individuals in any account of social phenomena (i.e., methodological individualism), the facts concerning normative demands have increasingly been emphasized to explain the actions of individuals. For instance, the socially emergent capacity to make ourselves an object of our own consciousness by incorporating the objectifying eye of the other abets in the maximization of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) or impression management (Schlenker, 1980). While one may at least directly "know" that one is conscious and has experiences (Jones, 1967), it is others who on an observational and interpretative basis mediate self-ascription. James (1892 /1962) earlier touched upon the larger "moral" or interpersonal dimensions that serve to make us socially responsive, or indeed excessively conforming as the case may be, by proposing a felt desideratum for maintaining and enhancing one's membership in good standing in favoured "club opinions." Cooley (1922) enlarges the forces of social influence upon our self-concepts by adding that such social responsiveness is also connected with the "general life" of society and the course of history. Cooley does, however, temper, if only slightly, this "sociologizing" of the self with a psychological consideration that the counterpoint to this convergent movement towards others is the presence of a private contrary self-feeling for individuating and demarcating oneself from others. On the continent, existentialism, motivated by the broad search for a "life philosophy," independently expanded upon the subjective significance of this double movement of a self "for others" in tension with the individual's "ex-istential" need to "stand out" for him- or herself from those same others. Unfortunately, a "jargon of authenticity" (Adorno, 1973/1964), that secular substitute for a theological language of the

numinous, too often proffers bombastic terminology as a substitute for careful description and analysis. While North American psychologists were justified in objecting to certain writers' use of a mystifying jargon, some of the more rigorous contributions from this continental tradition were simply tarred with the same brush.

North American psychology would, for the most part, eschew the larger questions of a philosophical anthropology and turn instead to analysis of the instrumental nature of self-esteem and "impression management." The problem then arises that even if we accept self-esteem (Epstein, 1973) or impression management (Baumeister, 1982) as the omnipresent intent of our given public account of what we are all about, it is not clear why this would also motivate divergent self-reflections upon oneself, some of which might well serve to give a less than favorable opinion about oneself. People do disclose to others their self-doubts, foibles and failings. In the case of self-esteem, reflection and self-narrative do not appear to be necessary for the possession of such self-feeling. Indeed, it may well be the case that a self-narrative is quite unrelated to an avowed self-feeling. A person could narrate a life of social failures and personal mistakes, but be proud of suffering such defeats as well as she or he has. As Oscar Wilde wryly has a character say in his play Lady Windermere's Fan, "experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes." If, in the case of impression management, self-reflections are a kind of "private" stage rehearsal, then they are indeed peculiar, for the "actor/scene" ratio, to use Burke's (1945/1969) terminology, is quite often inapposite. The story of my life includes such things as my reminiscences of childhood pleasures and perceived injuries, and these memories are a significant aspect of self-reflection. But they are not relevant to impression management, as are the particulars of a mental rehearsal of, say, asking the bank manager for a loan tomorrow. The explanation that one's private self-accounts function as a kind of mental dress rehearsal for social action would seem, *prima facie*, to be a script designed for the wrong play.

In contradistinction to such a strong emphasis upon the interpersonally created and "oversocialized" (Wrong, 1961) self, greater emphasis may instead be placed on the personal perspective of how one sees and experiences oneself as the source-spring for this talk of a self. Here we turn from a symbolic interactionist or social constructionist view towards a cognitive notion in which the self is seen to serve as a kind of general internal model of cognitive activities that is *mutatis mutandis* applicable to all others (Kelly, 1955; Epstein, 1973; Humphrey, 1983; Lyons, 1986). Psychologists, whose professional interests have inclined them to favour research programs that maximize data collecting, may find that this notion lacks a requisite empirical specificity amenable to certain methodologies. Hence, for example, it could be proposed that such a cognitive model serves to direct the attribution of causal powers to oneself, others, or impersonal influences (Gorlitz, 1980).

Another attempt to establish a researchable hypothesis as to what is served by our notion of the self is to consider it as a constellation of generalized "beliefs" (so-called prototypes or self-schemata) about oneself which facilitate the processing and storage of self-relevant information, the ultimate purpose of which is to provide for a necessary stability in our perceptions of others and comparisons of ourselves with those others (Markus & Smith, 1981; Lewicki, 1984; Markus, Smith & Moreland, 1985). We can see that such considerations of what might be the ultimate function of a self-schema bring us back to the symbolic interactionist's notion of the socially produced self which in turn serves some necessary social purpose.

Of course, it can be conversely argued that it is not the self that is functional to some end, but rather that the self is its own end. From this perspective the very fact of our everyday talk of the self simply addresses what may be a species specific human need for "self-actualization" (Goldstein, 1939) or "self-direction" (Rogers, 1961). To make more concrete how such preferable states are to be reached, normative notions of "good" living are introduced. Out of this theory comes the advice that, for example, one's own self is better

realized commensurate with the degree to which one can fully acknowledge the reality of other selves and enter into mutually affective relations with them (Kohut, 1982; Fromm, 1955). Clearly, such perspectives on the self attempt to provide a psychological justification for what is thought to be a needed normative guide to "good" living. Although laboratory norms of human performance or statistical norms of mental health are not entirely value free, they do tend to be so attenuated as to fall short of providing answers to people's concerns about how to live well or meaningfully. On the other hand, critics have derided these explicit normative assertions as unwittingly serving individual selfishness (Wallach and Wallach, 1983), narcissism (Lasch, 1978), or the repression of deeper individual discontent and social unrest (Jacoby, 1975). While we may conclude that the idea of the self has too often been overburdened conceptually, it is clear that the language of the self is nevertheless closely tied to important and fundamental issues.

From a somewhat larger perspective and yet one of more immediate concern for us denizens of society, the self overlaps with the social-political notion of the "person." Here, the language of self aids in making the claim that one's person is to be treated in certain desired ways by others. Thus, what Amélie Rorty (1987) says about a central function for the concept of the "person" can also be said of the "self," namely, that the concept gives "us grounds for being taken seriously, with respect"; that it is "an insurance policy against being treated as a cipher, or a thing, or one of the other animals" (p. 57). This claim is supported in part by the identity of the self, or person, with social roles and personae rather than with simple biological identity. More importantly, in Western society the notions of both the self and person have come to be used to denote and affirm the idea of an autonomous agent responsible for a large class of self-determined actions. A being capable of rational, creative action and self-definition is therefore judged as deserving of a respect that would not be given to the mindless or merely mechanical. While the concepts of the person and self are here seen to overlap, it is useful at least to roughly distinguish the notion of the person as being

more frequently employed than the notion of the self for purposes of conceiving of the individual as a member of some collectivity or as some abstract social entity. The notion of the self, particularly as it is found in our folk psychology, more readily brings to mind some conception of an individual's status as a moral agent, or at least some recognition of an individual's physical or mental distinctiveness.

Given this diversity of talk about the self in both psychology and in everyday idiom, it is apparent that our discourse about the self serves any number of semantic needs. In view of the evident pressure upon the idea of the self to accommodate what has been a chorus of demands, it is not surprising that, starting in the eighteenth and culminating in the twentieth century, a person's self has come to be seen as a plurality (Van den Berg, 1964/1974). Nietzsche, for instance, in a few of his posthumously published notes arranged under the title, "The Will to Power," challenges the idea of a fixed, substantial selfhood. There is no closeted self waiting to be revealed; rather all is interpretation. Nietzsche instead entertained an image of consciousness being ruled by a competing "aristocracy of equals" (1885/1967, p. 270). This parliamentary metaphor is in strict opposition to the older metaphor of the self as the inner monarch. It may well be that in a pluralist society with conflicting demands, extensive separation and specialization of roles, and a peculiar emphasis upon secular images of "self-realization" rather than a single theological image of "self-surrender" or "self-fulfillment," the self will naturally be seen as divided and multifaceted. In any event, this trend towards conceiving of oneself as multiple has made for a particular tension in 19th- and 20th-Century psychology. Historically, grammatically and phenomenologically, the self still represents some core, unifying principle. Our more recent notion of the self as a plurality is held as a demystification of this persistent view of ourselves as somehow all of a piece.

A notable moment in the history of modern psychology concerning this general trend towards conceiving of ourselves as multiple is, of course, William James's (1892/1962)

distinction of the four proprietary divisions of the self, one of which--namely the social self--is itself a further plurality such that any one person "has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him" (p. 192). Similarly Mead (1934/1962) says that "we divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances" (p. 142). It is commonplace to conceive of the individual in contemporary mass society as composed of a crowd of different selves, a plurality even surpassing the ancient accomplishment of Proteus who could assume a variety of non-human shapes but whose human form at least remained singular. While Proteus was a single self assuming any number of non-human disguises, the current image is that of a corporation of selves going under a single name.

With this notion of the self as multiple, the problem of unity and choice becomes an issue which in turn demands consideration of all four of those characteristics of our everyday discourse about the self described above. In spite of its seemingly substantive reality in current reflective experience, this notion of the multiple self should possess the quality of an inherently theoretical character for our conceptions of being a self. If there is this smorgasbord of competing usages, the possibilities for interpretation are all the more complex, and what one chooses says something about oneself and how one conceives of others. Essentialist and theory-free claims about the nature of ourselves are thus out of step with this diversity of choices for self-definition. Choices of interpretation in self-disclosure bring us also to consider what might be a psychology of self-narratives. How do we organize and collect experience in support of a coherent self-account that remains commensurate with our prior personalized images and experiences of ourselves and others? If we cannot avoid such interpretation, decision and even bias in this matter, the solution then is to acknowledge the hermeneutic task inherent to self-narrative. Even doing psychology, which is a special kind of public account of ourselves, implies, as Liam Hudson (1972) has argued, that psychologists are, as is everyone else, "interpreters, 'hermeneuts'--creatures who pan for sense in the muddy waters of human transaction and who . . . collect this sense into the

bundles of remembered event, belief and fantasy that constitute the human biography" (p. 163).

Given the highly personal interpretive nature of psychology, and particularly of a psychology of the self wherein the self is conceived of as highly plural and hence equivocal, we can enquire into those factors that help guide and give form to the task of self-interpretation. Along with whatever orchestrates this private assemblage of selves together, there must also be some process that serves to exclude some selves as ego-dystonic and favour others as closer to the center, otherwise we would feel equally at home with all our selves. Central to any such dialectic of self-interpretation and self-definition is the question not only as to "what I am" but also, for the contemporary plural citizen, the question as to which of the available selves is "really" me or most representative of what I think myself to be. To put it another way: Which are the selves of myself, without which I would not be what I am? No doubt, as the symbolic interactionists like Mead and Cooley have emphasized, the interpretation of what I am is a species of social knowledge. The act of self-interpretation, of ranking and choosing which self or selves is me in any given situation or at any time, is essentially a negotiation between myself (which is a product of an earlier negotiation) and my social relations. While the interpretation of ourselves originates in a fundamental way with our social relations, to what extent do we nevertheless remain the active interpreters of ourselves?

In his analysis of what we might mean by saying "I myself," Karl Jaspers (1932/1970) makes the astute remark that "I know myself in my role, and yet I am not identical with it" (ibid, p. 30). While there is an immediate ring of good sense in these words, and good sense that strikes at core weaknesses in the oversocialized conception of ourselves, it is not immediately clear how this paradoxical state of affairs is possible. Aside from the complexities of self-deception, if I know who I am, is that not what I am? Of course, in a trivial sense, this moment of achieving an account of who I am is not yet part of that

self-knowledge until a further account is made. This infinite regress is akin to the problem of self-prediction discussed by MacKay (1960) who exploited the logical impossibility of a person having causal knowledge of his or her future decisions in advance of making such decisions, since that very causal knowledge of what one is likely to do can in turn be one of the new conditions influencing what one does in fact decide to do. Jaspers, however, has in mind the more profound insight that while our social existence provides the vital objectifications of what and who we are, there remains a felt inner freedom such that we cannot help but define ourselves as always being able, within circumscribed limits, to change, to resist or to give consent to any of these objectified selves that we have become. Even if we cannot imagine or feel a potential to change ourselves into a self other than that which our social relations inform us that we are, there remains a felt option inwardly to resist, or consent to, any such objectification of ourselves. In a series of thought experiments, C. A. Campbell (1967/1940) helps to illustrate this inner resistance as found in the experience of efforts of will. For instance, he thought that only a negative answer is possible to the following question: "Can we, while making an effort of will, conceive it as even possible that we could not have decided to refrain from making the effort?" (p. 72)

Whether or not it is proper to draw psychological or even philosophical import from the "self-evidence" of such thought or *Gedanken* experiments, the experience of some range of personal freedom with respect to our actions and to ourselves is an important psychological fact that a comprehensive psychology of the self must properly explain, or at least describe. This inner life of self-determination and self-definition, however, is simply not well represented by current models and metaphors in psychology. As a result, the glib response has often occurred of simply denying the importance or "reality" of such mental phenomena for study. Certainly, we are accountable for our everyday talk about ourselves and others, and if it be the case that the strong sense of responsibility is part of what is involved in our

social accountability for our words, then it is presupposed that our discourse about ourselves and others involves strategic choice among actual possibilities.

Often, then, the self-concepts offered by academic psychology fail to account for experiences individuals take to be central to their ideas of themselves. A textual metaphor of self-knowledge arguably captures the self-defining quality of individual experience better than other metaphors. Before we consider this kind of textual metaphor for the notion of self-knowledge and how the practice of everyday discourse provides a context for public self-description, brief mention should be made of the process of metaphoric understanding and some of the problems incurred with the previous images of self-interpretation. An analysis of the process and "power" of metaphor not only helps to relocate previous images of the self but will also serve to illuminate some key features of discourse interpretation in general.

II. METAPHOR AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE SELF

In the previous section the notion of self and its problems of explication were noted. To help get around the problem of the various definitions and theoretical views of the notion of the self, a detour was made regarding the general character of what is conveyed by our everyday talk about ourselves. The evaluative dimension of our discourse about ourselves and its origins in our social discourse and interactions with others has been a predominant interest in the study of the self and this dissertation will continue along that path. More specifically, the contextualized nature of our discourse to others about ourselves will be further pressed, although the interpretative nature of our self-evaluations as they bear upon our self-definition will continue to be a background theme. Given the importance of language in enabling social interaction and communication, as well as being an instrument of understanding, the *usage* of the language itself, particularly as rhetoric (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), discourse and metaphor, is being seen as something that influences the social dimensions of the scientific pursuit of knowledge (Simons, 1989, 1990) and psychology (Goot, 1986; Billig, 1987; Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989).

Metaphor has in recent years received some attention for its role in expressing certain preconceptions and in turn shaping the history of psychology (Leary, 1990) and even how we live (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphors of the self serve to both express our theoretical understandings and to shape partly and direct both the theory and discourse of the self. In the section following this review of the some of the major metaphoric understandings of the self, I will discuss our talk about ourselves as a speech act, of which metaphor itself is one variant (MacCormac, 1985). This section on metaphor will thus serve to organize previous theory about the self and indicate how past metaphors attempted to concretize the abstract, decontextualized notions of the self by invoking some kind of spatialized representation. Metaphors of the self attempt to present an heuristic depiction of the self, one that often expresses or even bootlegs a particular theoretical explication of the

self. It will be suggested that this abstracting and decontextualizing of the self needs to be restrained by the addition of the textual metaphor of the self. The textual metaphor takes into account our talk about ourselves as a situated speech act.

As Sperber and Wilson (1986b) have claimed, "ordinary discourse is shot through with metaphors; if anything it is a long stretch of strictly literal discourse that should be seen as a departure from a norm" (p. 541). If we consider exaggerations and observations of similarities as possessing the structure of metaphors, then indeed much of our everyday discourse involves metaphors or a metaphoric emphasis. Even science recognizes both a pedagogic and heuristic role for metaphors. Certainly, the theoretical necessity of models is acknowledged, and if it is further held that models are more than fictions of convenience, that they help disclose to us the way the world is by way of an interpretive approximation, then the representational value of models is also thereby affirmed. What is not so well appreciated is that the process underlying scientific model building and comprehension is a metaphoric process (Pepper, 1942; Hesse, 1963; Leatherdale, 1974; Quine, 1979).

Chapanis's (1961) generally accepted definition of models as "representations, or likenesses, of certain aspects of complex events, structures or systems, made by using symbols or objects which in some way resemble the thing being modelled" (p. 115) clearly makes central the feature of a representational similitude or analogue. What makes this similitude more than a stated simile that S is "like" P, is the general proclivity to reify our models, to see them as realistic representations of the way things are. In fact, for scientists of a realist bent (which most tend to be), the model may be viewed as more "real" than the messy empirical set of observations that it explains or represents. Even if we state carefully our models in a circumscribed language of an "as if" conditional comparison, such a qualifying "as if" more often acts as an invitation to consider how far a metaphoric identification that S is a P can be pursued, at least provisionally. I shall here ignore the grammatical distinction between simile and metaphor since the latter more closely resembles

how a model is actually entertained in the minds of its advocates, notwithstanding the way in which it is expressed.

Metaphor in general, as its etymology suggests, consists of the transfer of meaning from one thing to another (Beardsley, 1967). This transfer is carried by the structure of a propositional identity (S is P) that unites what is specifically identified by the principal subject (S) of the metaphor with its literally absurd predicate (P). The literal absurdity is overcome by abstracting from P the relevant trait or attribute (A) that serves to modify S intelligibly (S is A). Scientific metaphors are usually more complex in that more than one single meaning or even single image is involved. Rather, there may be entailed a series of interlocking images or a complex of meanings as we find with what is referred to as an "extended metaphor." To illustrate this transfer of meaning, let us consider the evolving metaphor that centrally informs objectivist psychology. Initially, the recommended image was that a human being should be "taken as a complex physical object in interaction with a world of other physical objects" (Dashiell, 1928, p. 14).

With the success of cybernetic machines, the image was "fleshed out," so to say, to become a particular and special object rather than any object. Namely, we are "to conceive of man in the robot end of the continuum" (Krasner, 1965). With the new advancements of neurophysiology and artificial intelligence, the metaphor of objectivist psychology now would suggest, if I may be permitted to put it quite baldly, that the person "is a computer made out of meat." This metaphor, while it may not be so explicitly stated, serves as a kind of "telescope metaphor" in being an implication or background meaning of the other, more commonly stated metaphors such as, "the mind functions computationally" (Pylyshyn, 1984) or that "intelligent beings are *semantic engines*" (Haugeland, 1981, p. 31). Of course, objections may be raised about how illuminating such a metaphor may in the end turn out to be and whether it may be too underconstrained for validation (Bunge, 1956). Such objections enter into the larger debate that must give due credit to the metaphor's utility in inspiring

justified belief, new knowledge and socially responsible action through what might be its conceptual power to integrate and critique existing knowledge and theory.

With respect to this attribution of relevancies we discover or illuminate through metaphor, more is involved than a mere substitution or synonymy of meaning, otherwise we would merely have synecdoche or metonymy. Along with an invitation to the understander to complete what is only then the apparent inferences of identity, we also have in metaphor, particularly as the metaphor remains "alive," the tension or inner opposition between the principal subject and predication which makes for something illustrative, striking, or "insightful" through the metaphoric transfer of meaning (Richards, 1936; Beardsley, 1967; Ricoeur, 1975/1977). As Ricoeur puts it, there is a "tension between two interpretations: between a literal interpretation that perishes at the hands of semantic impertinence and a metaphorical interpretation whose sense emerges through non-sense" (ibid., p. 247). As exemplified by the computer metaphor, there clearly exists a tension between the subject and the predicate such that the utterance is defective if we were to read the statement literally. "Fleshy computers" have not been made as of yet. If they were, a digital computer, whether it be instantiated biomass or silicon, is still a digital computer and its processing is in principle quite different from human thought (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986), or for that matter from what we know of actual neural structures (Wooldridge, 1963). Possibly, a day may come when human thinking reproduces itself both in its physical operations and cognitive functions in one of its own products, but that day is not yet in sight. Nevertheless, psychologists are able to understand this sentence that S is P and to be thereby heuristically inspired, even though in this case P, a fleshy computer, does not actually exist. No doubt, to grasp the world intelligibly depends upon the availability of appropriate conceptual frames into which our experiences will meaningfully fit. Metaphors enable us to consider something which is not a mere case of P nevertheless possessing a "P-ness" to the extent that the relevant A attributes of P apply to S.

There is another key characteristic that can be lost sight of when metaphor is dissected semantically. In fact, the suggestion is that the tension of sameness-despite-difference is always present, which may well be the case in our reflections upon the workings of metaphor. But what about the psychological experience of metaphoric understanding where, either right at the beginning or later through accustomed usage, the tension seems to be surpassed? As Yoos (1971) reminds us, a remarkable feature of metaphors as we experience them is that the words retain their ordinary meanings yet a secondary metaphoric meaning is something we can grasp almost immediately without explicitly reflecting that the words involved bear a symbolic rather than a literal reference. We usually don't need to stop short and ponder upon the semantic incompatibility and opposition, but simply apprehend the metaphor as conveying a way of conceiving or imagining something from a different, if not novel, perspective.

Permitting the above generality of the term "model," to cover all expressions that "insightfully" liken one thing to another, it can be seen that even a scientific notion of a theoretical model consists of a metaphor. Consider what Max Black (1962) classified as the lowest notion of a model as simply a scaled down or scaled up simulation. Such a simulation we might think to be minimally metaphorically bound or not at all. Whether it be merely a miniature of an eighteenth-century sailing ship or Milgram's controversial simulation of obedience to authority, one must still decode the model and carefully read off the relevant properties of the model to arrive at what may be the now better or "insightfully" disclosed properties of the original. Rules of analogical interpretation also allow us to ignore the irrelevancies. The plastic material of the model ship must be seen as irrelevant for the analogy to work. The fact that Milgram's short-lived simulation employs obliging volunteers taking their instruction under a scientific rather than a political authority should delimit, if we are to be properly circumspect with this analogical simulation, certain claims for Milgram's laboratory studies to represent adequately what occurs outside the lab. Even

"scale" models entail an integrated body of statements that informs our systematic deployment of the features of the model purportedly relevant to that which it represents. A transfer of meaning thereby is effected. In addition, through such a detour via the scale model's adjustment to the level of something larger or smaller in size than that to which the model refers, we may be surprised by a disclosure of new or better grasped relationships and relevancies.

As Searle's (1979) analysis nicely demonstrates, we must distinguish between the sentence meaning which by itself is never metaphorical and the speaker's or "utterance meaning" where the possibilities for a meaningful metaphoric attribution emerge. This entails that interpretation requires something more than knowledge of the syntactical and semantical rules. In all likelihood, a plurality of shared strategies of utterance interpretation exists for the interpretation of metaphors, as well as for identification of them in the first place. Such strategies need not be construed as conscious, deliberate processes mindfully undertaken by the hearer or reader. One strategy, according to Searle, that would be part of a reader's or hearer's means to infer the possible metaphorical status of an utterance would be to entertain metaphoric meaning when first encountering the very presence of a defective literal meaning. When the situation requires it, we thus "look for an utterance meaning that differs from sentence meaning" (Searle, 1979, p. 105), especially if we have no good reason to doubt the operative assumption that the speaker or writer is conveying, or is competently intending to convey, meaningful discourse.

In her account of how metaphoric interpretation occurs as readily as it does, Eva Kittay (1987) draws upon a relational theory of meaning which stresses the importance of the conflict between contextual factors and the first-order meanings that the words would literally signify. When we discern this conflict between the literal meaning of the words and the context in which it is said, then "our second step is to extract a content from the context which serves as the second content of the metaphor" (ibid, p. 140). The implication of this

account is that not only metaphoric language, but also even literal language is informed or constrained by contextual considerations, if only because even the most literal statement can still be interpreted as a possible metaphor. If someone says without intending any deception, "I'm a student" and we know that they in fact are not a student, what are we to make of this self-attribution? A first possibility to consider is its intended metaphoric meaning. In view of the importance of context for discourse in general, we should not be surprised that our public discourse about what we presume to know directly, namely ourselves, is also constrained and informed by contextual considerations.

A. Previous Metaphors of the Self

1. Between the ape and the computer

In this latter half of the twentieth century, psychology has marked its scientific progress by turning to the ape instead of the rat and to the computer instead of the telephone exchange. While the choice of higher animals in their own environment and of the more complex machine enriches psychology's pantry of metaphor for certain outward human performances, these need not be the only, nor should they be assumed to be the best, models for human consciousness and mind.

The animal mind lacks the kind of language complexity that is not only a characteristic but arguably a requisite of human thought and self-consciousness. Linguists have long argued, with some cogency, that without the aid of signs we could not clearly and consistently distinguish between ideas and thus, "without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language" (de Saussure, 1915/1966, p. 112). The emotional repertoire of the animal world is more illuminating since this is something humans and animals share more in common, but even here animal affect is at times too removed to serve as an analogue of such socially embedded emotions as revenge or conceit. Of course, it is true that there exists

a primate quite capable of driving buses, writing plays and legislating in Parliament. The question is whether the close kin of this primate share the relevant capacities for self-definition and self-narration that we know can be an evolutionary possibility. This question of propinquity poses a dilemma for model building on this issue. If the non-human primate, on the one hand, is simply a kind of mute human, or if humans are merely a very loquacious ape, then for purposes of metaphor heuristics the conceptual difference may be too small. We have a near identity rather than a metaphor. Through the abstraction of a suitable metaphor we advance our understanding of something by conceptualizing it in terms of something else while simultaneously somehow keeping in mind that it is not the thing we compare it to. If we are trying to work through an identity rather than metaphor, then what has been gained other than a kind of ethological or sociobiological-biological language strip of certain, but by no means all, anthropomorphic prose? If self-narration and self-definition are fundamentally a social-psychological phenomenon then an ethological or even a sociobiological perspective cannot suffice as a complete or central perspective on the matter (Bock, 1980; Thompson, 1989). If, on the other hand, there is a marked qualitative difference between ourselves and other primates, then Gallup's (1970; 1991) apes peering with self-recognition into a mirror serve as a metaphor with no *a priori* superiority over the metaphor of the computer. Like any other metaphor, it is now to be judged through the purchase of what is illuminated over the cost of where it is misleading.

The search for similitude between ourselves and animals was initially quite muddled with excessive anthropomorphic projection. The extreme is epitomized by the absurd practice of formally bringing animals to court, assigning them a lawyer, torturing them to exact confessions and even dressing up the convicted animal in human clothing just before the solemnity of mutilation and execution (Evans, 1906/1987). Comparative psychology's attempt to purge itself completely of all anthropomorphic discourse went too far in the opposite direction. There resulted a theory-blindness to the species-typical individualities

and the extensive repertoire of flexible behaviours of animals in their natural habitats. In ignoring the inner directives and "motives" of the natural animal, theory failed to be truly comparative. Of course, notions of lawbreaking, criminal intent, moral culpability or "evildoing" are privileged attributions that should properly be reserved for the human species. Writers like Plutarch, Monboddo and Montaigne are still committing this category mistake in thinking that the natural "innocence" of animals gives them an automatic moral superiority over most humans. While admittedly at times we cannot but be tempted by such a judgement when we survey human history, it is still a faulty anthropomorphism. We should keep in mind that anthropomorphism is simply reasoning by analogy which should not automatically be seen as always and in every degree inapposite. Hebb (1946), for instance, reports that a purely "objective" approach to the study of chimpanzee behaviour at the Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology proved greatly inferior to the free use of those "anthropomorphic concepts of emotion and attitude" that so quickly and easily describe and predict the "peculiarities of the individual animals" (p. 88).

Even the very failure of the attempted analogy of animals as "wrongdoers" can be revealing. The distinction of "innocence" can at least serve to suggest an important difference. What conditions or capacities may be presupposed by this gap of apt ascriptions (humans can be described as wrongdoers, animals cannot) may also be necessary for what we understand by the concept of self-interpretation. No doubt, primates, as beings with lives of their own "that matter to them" (Regan, 1986, p. 105), have some sense of themselves in a world of opportunities and dangers. They share with ourselves an interest in the avoidance of pain and in the preservation of their lives. At least with chimpanzees and orangutans (Gallup & Suarez, 1986) there is recognition of, and indeed an exploratory curiosity for, themselves in a mirror as themselves and not as another animal. From such demonstrative evidence, we may well be justified in attributing an awareness of their own bodies and behaviours to chimpanzees and orangutans and to this extent we can say that they possess a

"self-awareness." Quite possibly, they have some further sense of themselves as individuated beings aware of their surroundings and even their own interests (Griffin, 1981). But even if we go this far, do we have self-conscious beings engaged in the problematics of self-definition? It does not appear to be the case, or at least the making of such claims seems to lead us too close to the untenable interpretation of a mental life capable of, and accountable for, say, "self-doubt." Of course, Gallup did observe the chimpanzees employing the mirror "to *experiment* with unique facial gestures and body postures" (Gallup & Suarez, 1986, p. 6), but he does not report whether such new gestures and postures were then habitually adopted beyond the mirror so as to maintain, as it were, a new "self-image." But if this extension were observed we would still rightfully hesitate to attribute self-definition to the chimpanzee since we need to be assured that such post-mirror "conduct" was not simply behaviour reinforced during (or soon after) the mirror gazing either externally by the response of other nearby chimps and humans or internally by the sensation of the new pattern of body movements.

Clearly, we are in the boundary region of what we can justifiably claim to have in common with the ape. But no matter how far we go, the severe limits of inter-species communication preclude the kind of parallel analysis that we might have sought in the first place by turning instead towards ourselves. After all, Gallup's research perspective is akin to that of a stranger or alien inspecting from the outside, without benefit of direct communication, the notion of self-awareness and self-consciousness. Understanding the content of the chimpanzee's self-consciousness may well be akin to the problem of analyzing the structure, form and content of a literary work if we did not know how to read it but could only observe its effects on those who could read it. At best, we might be able to deduce from outside what social or biologic functions such literary works might serve. Hence, Gallup speculates that self-awareness would serve as an additional source of inferential knowledge useful for anticipating and influencing the behaviour of other similar creatures. This may

well be the case, but it does not explain the peculiar and diverse manner in which such an "internal model" is constructed and experienced.

The promise of the computer model is that we can better hypothesize and analyze in formal terms what is going on inside, how the program is written and instantiated. The promissory program is further bolstered by the observation that computer models, as compared to animal models, can be thought to better approximate, and indeed surpass, the computational capacity of human language users. Searle's (1980) well-known Chinese room argument, however, at least makes clear that computers as syntactic devices are not "understanders" of language even if they should one day be successful at translating from Chinese to English and back to Chinese. The subjective life and mind accompanying a person's performances would seem to involve more than the computer's superior efficiency at manipulating data according to sequences of algorithm-governed operations. Even to speak of "rule-governed operations" is misleading in its suggestion we can think of these machines as "following rules." Shanker (1987) makes the case that this violates our logical grammar of rule-following as a normative rather a mechanical action, as an action predicated on some necessary minimal "understanding" of the rule. We lapse into the same kind of conceptual confusion that would occur if we were to literally ascribe to the members of a meeting that they were following Robert's rules of order even though they were ignorant of, or did not understand, the rules. If we were to say such a thing, it would only be figurative for the simple observation that the members just happen to be inadvertently or unknowingly abiding by Robert's rules. Notwithstanding the generousities of idealization and wishful rhetoric, the computer analogue still remains a metaphor and one that too often invites a misleading anthropomorphism (Dreyfus, 1987). Indeed, as the problems of the computer metaphor are becoming more widely appreciated and, as Michie (1982) notes, the former heuristic value of the metaphor is being replaced by more exact and fruitful formalizations and mathematics, the metaphor is beginning to become less frequent in the scientific prose of AI science itself.

While anthropomorphic speculation inaugurated both the animal and computer models, a circumspect anthropomorphism tempered with naturalism now appears to be the most fruitful approach for the understanding of animals (Griffin, 1981), while an "objectivist," or more precisely an electrical-mechanical and symbolic-mathematical prose, is more fitting for AI.

Useful though the metaphors of the computer and the ape have proven to be for the non-conscious domain of ourselves, a more felicitous metaphor for the understanding of self-referencing and self-knowledge would be desirable. Rather than attempt to find a comparable process in its fullness in some other being or thing, the usual metaphors that have been forwarded have served instead to emphasize some specific feature of what we experience with respect to ourselves. Hermann Lotze's (1856/1885) metaphor of the tree, for example, is too remote a comparison for any implication that the tree is a homologue or possesses common attributes with ourselves. This kind of remote metaphor should instead be seen as serving to focus analysis inward towards ourselves rather than aiming for understanding from outside. In the case of Lotze's tree metaphor, our attention is drawn to the need to differentiate the transient and accidental from the more enduring experiences of ourselves. Those variegated self-feelings coming from experience are the foliage in all its changing colours and seasonal variances while our more permanent "habit of being" (ibid, p. 252) represents the trunk and branches that endure and remain.

The empiric Ego appears to us like the foliage of a tree, whose degree of fulness and beauty depends on the influences of the year; even if it be stripped off, the vegetative force remains in the trunk unaltered, and justifies the hope of better results under more favourable conditions. Thus, by this aesthetic picture of our abiding disposition, we are chiefly used to make our personality distinct to ourselves, and certainly we thereby attain to a truer and more speaking likeness of our nature than is supplied by the heterogeneous multitude of our actual remembrances, which include too much of the past and accidental and too little of the future. (ibid, p. 253)

This notion of a central trunk or of something at center serving to unify, is similarly proposed through other images (Allport, 1961; Claparède, 1911; Combs and Snygg, 1949; Koffka, 1935/1963; Lewin, 1936/1966). Combs and Snygg (1949), for instance, employed the

metaphor of visual perception, the central locus in personality of the "phenomenal self" serving as an experiential point of orientation and reference for an individual's behaviour in the same way as the center or focal region serves a similar function in vision. Metaphors of the self as somehow at the center can be seen as attempts to address, while potentially not truly explaining, such thorny issues of individual identity as conceptual unity, temporal continuity, and even integrity.

As another example, the dramaturgical metaphor of the actor on stage (Burke, 1962; Goffman, 1959) has fruitfully highlighted the social embeddedness and conversational nature of our self-narratives. Less inspiring has been Maslow's (1968) prosaic metaphor of the acorn becoming an oak. Presumably, this would serve to direct attention to what might be the coherence or progression underlying the many changes that occur over time in one's self-conceptions. Cattell's (1965) image of a "dynamic lattice" has more profitably directed research and theory towards finding coherence in change by giving emphasis to a structural organization among correlative changes. Of the many models or metaphors for the self that Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984) list, some would appear to be so remote as to be no more than superficial homologues rather than heuristic metaphors. Hofstadter's (1979) attempt, for instance, to unpack the paradox of self-reference and the limits of self-knowledge by pointing to the DNA molecule's "self-replication," or Godel's incompleteness theorem, over-extend what are no doubt fascinating topics in their own right.

2. Metaphors of the mirror, property, schema and text

Three specialized metaphors that have been of great influence in psychology are the well known metaphors of the mirror, of personal property, and of the schema.

Cooley's (1902/1964) "looking glass self" offers the causal theory that the "self-idea" is formed by what we imagine or perceive to be our appearance to another person and by what we further imagine or perceive to be the other's judgement of that appearance. We may now

add to our earlier discussion of this oversocialized conception of ourselves some consideration of the heuristic and conceptual power of the metaphor that informs this view. This mirror metaphor borrows from classical epistemology the image that our "glassy essence" mirrors, via internal representations, external things in the world (Rorty, 1979; Singer, 1984). Adam Smith in 1782 wrote that "We examine our persons limb by limb, and by placing ourselves before a looking-glass, or by some expedient, endeavor, as much as possible to view ourselves at a distance and with the eyes of other people" (cited by Denzin, 1984). Cooley's additional phrase that we "imagine" our impressions upon others leaves open the possibility that this mirroring may not always be complete or true; that, to use Bacon's (1605/1915) words, "far from the nature of a clear and equal glass, wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence, . . . [the metaphoric mirror] is rather like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture" (p. 132). One might have thought that such a long standing qualification of our "glassy essence" would highlight the central role of interpretation and the probability of error that interpretation carries. Instead, the notion that perception can get things firsthand as does a "mirror" seems to have prevailed. Hence, the "self that is most importunate is a reflection, largely from the minds of others" (Cooley, 1902/1964, p. 246). Where Cooley's mirror metaphor does differ most strikingly from the classic notion of a mirror reflecting the world without being changed is that this mirror of ourselves is changed by what it reflects from the eyes of others. This idea of change has led to the important heuristic contribution of the looking-glass metaphor, whereby our essential social nature is strongly brought to our attention, along with the fact that we come to know ourselves through our interactions with others. We are indeed intersubjective beings inextricably constituted by our social relations.

One may hold that a problem with this mirror metaphor is that it too easily suggests that we are indistinguishable from what is mirrored. On the level of an internal subject/object distinction between the act of reflecting upon oneself and the "self" reflected

upon, there is at least captured by the mirror metaphor the endless regress of the act upon its own content. In his presidential address to the American Psychological Association, Ernest Hilgard (1949) employs the mirror analogy to illustrate the "illusory" nature of self-awareness:

You presently find yourself as between two mirrors of a barber-shop, with each image viewing each other one, so that as the self takes a look at itself taking a look at itself, it soon gets all confused as to the self that is doing the looking and the self which is being looked at. (p. 377)

Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984) cite (p. 144) this quote in making their point about the confusion wrought by the mirror metaphor when used to represent the subject/object duality. Of course, there is a point to Hilgard's suggestion that the assumption that self-awareness is always translucent or "self-evident" to itself is overstated by the mirror metaphor. In spite of its misleading implications, the double mirror metaphor could alternatively be seen to suggest the inaccuracy of a strict "subject/object" dichotomy. Such is the equivocalness of metaphor. The act of self-awareness is directed towards a content or subject matter which in turn constitutes this very act as one of "self" awareness rather than say, sensory awareness. The double mirror metaphor helps us rightly to question the notion of such a strict internal subject/object dichotomy, although I am not aware of it being explicitly used for this purpose.

With respect to the self/other or the external subject/object distinction, however, the mirror metaphor may well be too misleading. The emphasis by the symbolic interactionists upon the self as constituted by our social relations is supported in the image of the content of the mirror being indistinguishable from what is mirrored. Indeed, we now cease to even be a mirror, for a mirror at least has an identity independent of what it mirrors. Cooley's looking-glass self tends to dissolve this separation. We are constituted by the sum total of our effects upon others to the extent that our glassy essence discerns or imagines those effects. Cooley does allow for the element of "self-feeling" towards these reflections of ourselves but it is not clear whether this affect is not simply a result of some logical or necessary entailment from the content of those reflections. Our self-reflections turn upon an "objective" order and we

are left with a picture of ourselves as also objectified. A kind of substantive self is thus introduced by this method of objectifying the subject even though some of the initial attraction of this metaphor was that it promised to obviate the problem of creating a substantive self. A particular problem that is introduced by any notion of a substantive self is that it tends to obscure the fact that "what we are as human agents is profoundly interpretation-dependent" (Taylor, 1988, p. 299), more profoundly than even the mirror metaphor would suggest. The connotation of this mirroring self as the composite picture of what it has mirrored is that the individual is not responsible for confronting and choosing something of him- or herself among the competing images. We are simply the cumulative effects of the mirroring of what others would make of us and in turn they are also so constituted. All that we are is merely the product of a whirligig social determinism. While an interactive social determinism is uncovered by this metaphor of the looking-glass self, the role of individual determination is obscured. If Sartre (1943/1956) is right about the self-deception or denial of ourselves as agents that can be effected through the technique of defining ourselves as things, then many of the favoured metaphors of psychology can be seen as abetting this denial through self re-definition. The image of the looking-glass self has also suggested that the self-concept is a kind of visual "picture" (see Hamlyn 1977) that people have of themselves. Narrative and propositional content of self-knowledge may be consequently underplayed if the visual metaphor is adopted along with a naive realism that ignores the profoundly interpretive role of even vision itself.

William James's (1950/1890) famous proprietary metaphor of the empirical self as simply the "sum total of all that he CAN call his" (p. 291) own, brings to attention the affective tie to the self as known. We are grieved by the loss of prized "possessions" whether they be external material objects legally owned or the very "material" of our own embodied selves like a hand or a habitual skill. James's "social self" is similarly constituted by an ownership of those social roles, relations and recognitions that a person would with pride or

disgrace "own" up to. James's "spiritual self," the third component of the objective or empirical self, is comprised of our "ownmost" intentional mental states such as our awareness, beliefs, emotions, and desires. That which an individual deems as most centrally belonging to himself is marked, according to James (1880/1950), by the same emotional tie, but in varying degrees, such that "if they wax or prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down" (p. 291). James, however, does not pursue this property metaphor in the direction of a critical appraisal of our self-relations reflecting what might be our disturbed social relations around property. The excessive narcissistic concern and self-seeking for ourselves that some critics see as presently endemic in the West (Lasch, 1978), could be seen as paralleling what Marcuse (1969/1972) considered our introjected "need for possessing, consuming, handling, and constantly renewing the gadgets, devices, instruments, engines, offered and imposed upon the people . . ." (p. 21). James, of course, could not have been able to anticipate the extreme degree to which we have come to seek and expand ourselves by what we can find and buy on the market. The proprietary metaphor may well be illuminating on this matter, but it does not seem to be very informative about how we come to know ourselves. What is the analogue for a bill of sale or a certificate of ownership in our self-accounts? We might speculate that for James this would be indexed by that "warmth" he talked about that is escort to our ownmost self-attributions. Such "warmth," however, is not something that is calculated like property values, nor is it something that would have been readily inferred from the metaphor of property itself.

Sir Frederic Bartlett (1932) introduced the term "schema" into the psychological literature. Bartlett's "schema" denotes "an active organisation of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response" (ibid, p. 201). The term, of course, had been introduced earlier, but in the more general sense of some persistent organization or internal model, as for example Head and Holmes's (1911) "postural model." For there to be coordinated movement at all, it is

necessary that there be some organizing mechanism that somehow ensures that spatial or sensory impressions of a past bodily movement or position are retained and properly organized so as help regulate and position the next successive movement. Head and Holmes proposed that the organization of the flux of impressions from all the immediately past bodily movements or positions is retained and translated into an internal model of the occurrent bodily position and that this internal model serves to regulate the next bodily movement while at the same changing with each new bit of incoming sensory impressions. Bartlett, while greatly appreciating Sir Henry Head's approach, took issue with this static connotation of the term, "schema," arguing that what is essential to the notion is not properly conveyed by the term; namely that the organized mass of past changes "are actively *doing* something all the time; are, so to speak, carried along with us, complete, though developing, from moment to moment." (p. 201). With respect to Bartlett's research on memory, this meant that remembering "is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction" (p. 213). In fact, Bartlett ventures to describe this construction, at its higher level when the function of consciousness enables an organism to "turn upon its own 'schemata' and to construct them afresh," as a process which we can see to be very much akin to the process of reading:

Suppose an individual to be confronted by a complex situation. . . . [An] individual does not normally take such a situation detail by detail and meticulously build up the whole. In all ordinary instances he has an over-mastering tendency simply to get a general impression of the whole; and, on the basis of this, he constructs the probable detail. Very little of his construction is literally observed and often . . . a lot of it is distorted or wrong so far as the actual facts are concerned. But it is the sort of construction which serves to justify his general impression. (p. 206)

Here we have well described the same process of textual understanding that Friedrich Ast referred to as the "hermeneutic circle." We approach the text by some preconception, or "fore-structures" (Heidegger, 1962), of the whole that informs the initial and very incomplete understanding of the parts. In turn, this nascent grasp and filling in of some of the detail through the overall understanding of the whole serves to flesh out, validate or revise those initial more general "forestructures." This movement, as it is repeated, makes for the

possibility of deeper and larger understandings just as repeated practice over time consolidates and extends the domain of the remembered.

It is too bad that Bartlett's suggestion that we speak about "active, developing patterns" was not adopted, since the term "schema" denotes a thing rather than a process. Recent proposals that the self-concept functions as an information-processing schema or prototype (Markus and Smith, 1981) curiously re-introduce the notion of a substantive self that Bartlett opposed. Instead of an ongoing process subject to distortions and errors, the notion of schema may suggest too stable and knowable an entity. A current view is to conceive of the self-schema as "an organization of knowledge" (Epstein, 1973; Greenwald, 1980) or a "complex, person-specific, central, attitudinal schema" (Greenwald and Pratkanis, 1984). There is the risk that one may overly reify these processes. We may do well to remember Bartlett's worry about the notion of remembering consisting merely of a "re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces." Possibly, we could emphasize, with appropriate descriptors and metaphors, the active but imperfect constructive process of self-interpretation.

Although many metaphors in the history of psychology have been proposed and are not to be denied their heuristic and conceptual utility, one metaphor that should be considered for its utility in helping to draw attention to the interpretive nature of self-knowledge and self-reference is that of the self as a kind of ongoing "text" requiring interpretation. Over half a century ago, Hans Prinzhorn (1932/1933) strongly stated that the "real task of psychology only begins with interpretation, a fundamental task which we must not allow to be obscured" (p. 253). Yet only recently has the model of the text (Ricoeur, 1971/1981; Shotter & Gergen, 1989) or that of reading (Hoy, 1980) been advanced as a more fitting metaphor for psychological understanding than the metaphors of vision. Not only does self-understanding share procedures of interpretation similar to that of textual understanding, but the "object" of self-interpretation shares some features with the text qua

text. Also, while the text and the computer can both be seen as human products, the process of explicating textual understanding and creation more directly represents mental states by its dependency on a mentalist language. Far from being its disadvantage, I see this as a possible strength with respect to understanding the content of our talk about ourselves.

In speaking about the textual qualities of our self-knowledge, we need to qualify the metaphor lest we reify the image to that of a finished text. Aside from the physical material of the text which only ages, the finished text as a cultural product tends to be presented as an object that endures, at least as a possibility, through time as the same thing. Clearly, the self through time is not thought to be of the same constancy as that of a physical, or even for that matter, of a cultural object. Similar to what Ricoeur calls the "fixation of meaning" that is provided by textual inscription of an author's words, there may be an analogous fixation of one's social identity in the public record assuming a certain persistent standing that may seem greater or more stable than what the individual him- or herself may feel to be the case. Also, even a finished text as a cultural object does vary with individual and social-historical variation in reader understanding of the same text. This variation notwithstanding, the inscribed words of the physical text read the same but the "text" of ourselves has the possibility of undergoing major revision, more in the manner of what can occur with an unfinished text. Research (Ross & Conway, 1986; Olson & Cal, 1984; Greenwald, 1980) that shows how the present serves as the main benchmark for the reconstruction of one's personal past demonstrates the extent to which one's personal identity is in part a current construction rather than a straightforward reconstruction. This concept of ourselves as a kind of quasi-text in the making that aims towards the narrative standards of coherence, unity and development may serve to provide some sense of constancy and personal meaning amidst the flux of everyday circumstances and haphazard change.

This representation of ourselves as a kind of quasi-text in the making can, nonetheless, be misleading. After all, we are working in the realm of metaphor. While our

conceptions of a future self can be likened to a planned text as we reckon it to be now, one's personal past is to a lesser extent also receding and changeable. This is in marked contrast to the even density and haecceity of the finished text.

If our self-conceptualizations are to be approached as a kind of quasi-text requiring interpretation by others and even by oneself, then the rules and strategies of discourse understanding figure as a means in our self-understandings. Spoken discourse about ourselves differs from written disquisitions like a diary or autobiography insofar as it serves a more immediate, transient purpose delimited in its time for discourse planning and revisions but whose purpose is facilitated by the assumptive "collaborative process" among speakers and addressees (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986). This difference may be more one of degree than of kind between spoken and written discourse. The most familiar and fundamental employment of language is of course in conversation, and a hermeneutic psychology can perhaps do no better than to start with the advances already made in how meaningful conversation is possible and is facilitated by certain strategies of interpretation.

III. CONVERSATION AS ACTION IN CONTEXT

Curiously, theories of language have historically been slow to acknowledge the complex ways in which every speaker adjusts what they say, even it be the "same" thought, to the different situations in which they might they say it. Listeners in turn adjust and even originate their interpretations of what they hear in accordance with the context in which they hear it. As performing members in a language community we all appreciate, if only through experiencing the many *faux pas* and gaffes of everyday speech, how the surrounding social context of discourse is important for the understanding of any discourse, but the classical theories of language tended to idealize language as a context-free code. Words and expressions were either right or wrong, correct or incorrect, or, as the logical positivists would have it, "verifiable" or not.

John Austin (1955/1962) was one of the first to point out that there was more to language than it being simply a message-sending system performing the transfer of beliefs or truth-conditional statements between communicators. While it is true that speech does serve to exchange propositional statements that are to be evaluated by their truth or falsity, as is the case with the statement that "it rained here yesterday," there is also the large class of locutions that are simply "performatives" or "speech acts" in which something is done rather than any true claim being stated *simpliciter*. Such speech acts meaningfully serve the purpose of performing actions in the social world. Stating that, "I'll wager that it will also rain here today," is not a true or false statement but a public act that can serve to commit the speaker to another in a socially well-defined manner that we know as betting. This very same statement may also serve not as an actual wager but as a public declaration of the degree of confidence in a prediction about the weather. While such self-confidence in one's own prediction in itself is neither true nor false, it is open to judgements of warrantability. In fact, even simply stating that "it rained here yesterday" may also involve more than a mere

conveyance of a factual state of affairs; as one wit observed, "everyone talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it."

Our words and expressions are not simply right or wrong, correct or incorrect, although they can succeed or fail in many other ways. Austin cites the examples of celebrating marriage, christening a ship, bequeathing personal property to others and making a bet as cases where one performs a social action with one's words, each with quite differing social standards of their achieving the success they purport to achieve.

To put it another way, syntactic and semantic knowledge is normally taken to pertain only to linguistic units and such knowledge is deemed to be context independent and independent of the speaker's intentions. Linguistic competence in the syntactic rules and semantic meanings of our language, however, is not always sufficient for understanding. A patient in therapy one day opens the session with the statement, "Thanks to you I am beginning to hate my mother." The utterance as it stands can be read as a declaration of fact, a prediction, a complaint, a compliment, a threat, or even a joke. Any number of intended meanings or "speech acts" (Searle, 1969) can be performed by the very same utterance. Only when we have grasped something about our speaker's intent in a given context (or what the speaker would have us believe to be the intended effect of what was uttered) can we then more readily say that we have understood the meaning of the utterance (Grice, 1957/89a).

The key point here is that the surface semantics of the utterance, its denoted meanings, are simply not always sufficient for us to disambiguate that utterance. Understanding, then, becomes a matter of inference beyond the information given, inference which narrows down the possible meanings and contextual cues necessary for us to "read in" more than what is conventionally or literally denoted. While the effects of prior knowledge on retrieval, on recognition, and on comprehension have been studied, the inference-making

strategies presupposed by intelligible conversation itself have only recently been explored by philosophers of language.

There are a number of approaches that outline those principles of language usage that allow us to better understand how addressees "read in" meanings from statements that otherwise would remain ambiguous or obscure. Starting from the most general level and working our way down to the micro-level of particular conversations, and ignoring the overlap between the various approaches, we might first start with Gricean *pragmatics* (Grice, 1975/89b, 1978/89c; Lakoff, 1977; Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Lyons, 1981; Sperber and Wilson, 1986a). The grand aim here is to explicate the most general and universal principles presupposed by any efficient communication. Next, we could consider what has been called *speech act theory* (Austin, 1962/1975; Searle, 1969; Labov and Fanshel, 1977; Edmondson, 1981) which focuses upon conversation as a sequentially organized series of discrete acts, particularly the illocutionary act of the speaker's intent. At a more specific level still, might be the Birmingham school of *discourse analysis* (Coulthard, 1977; Stubbs, 1983; Coulthard and Montgomery, 1981; van Dijk, 1985), or the allied school originating out of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology simply referred to as *conversation analysis* (Heritage, 1984; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1978; Schegloff, 1982; Owen, 1983). While distinct in their approaches, both discourse analysis and conversation analysis focus upon the role of quasi-grammatical or tacit rules in the exchange structure, sequential ordering and "well-formedness" or "orderliness" of a conversation. Finally, we arrive at the domain of social psychology proper where all manner of particular verbal and non-verbal behaviours in conversation have been the subject of experiments. Psychologists like Duncan and Fiske (1977) and David Clarke, (1977; 1983) have attempted to isolate those acts in a conversation that may, for purposes of the inductive methodology of experiments, be reliably identified. Once identified, it is hoped that some empirical discoveries can be made concerning the rules that might regulate the deployment of those acts in conversational interactions.

What all of these approaches, from the most grand to the most modest, have in common is that they embrace the assumption that conversation consists in certain types of larger units (larger than the syntactic or semantic units) and that the production and regulation of these units is informed by rules. The formalism of this assumption is attractive for the social sciences and certainly this kind of search for units and rules has been very productive for general linguistics and for cognitive psychology. Still, we should be careful not to try to over-extend and reify rule-following or assume that there is as much of an achievement of intersubjectivity and rationality between people as we would like to believe.

Notwithstanding the above caveat, I will now draw upon a few of the notions of Gricean pragmatics in order to show how the rule-following assumption in the analysis of conversational action can help provide a framework for understanding something about the interpretative context in which experimental participants may be asked to produce for researchers certain self-descriptions.

A. THE APPROACH OF GRICEAN PRAGMATICS

Levinson (1983) has argued that one of the most important ideas to come out of pragmatics is the notion of *conversational implicatures*. Originating with Grice (1967/1989b), the key notion here is that *implicatures* are a kind of informal deduction derived from the assumption or heuristic that the speaker is either observing or purposely flouting the maxims of intelligible conversation. Grice (ibid, p. 32) gives the following example:

A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.

B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.

By granting that B is making an intelligent and relevant reply to A's remark, A can therefore infer that B "implicates" (implies) that Smith has, or may have a girlfriend in New York, and in that manner provides a rejoinder to A's remark. It should be noted that

implicatures are distinct from formal deductive inferences or logical inferences in being, for instance, most commonly defeated or changed by the simple addition of another premise.

The same expression can on different occasions give different implicatures, and they tend to be attached to the semantic content of what is said and not to the linguistic form.

What this illustrates is that the meaningfulness of much of our everyday talk involves reference to a larger context of what counts as relevant information. The context is determined, according to Grice and his followers, by rules of contextual interpretation informally adopted by members of a language community. For Grice, it was what he called the "cooperative principle" and its maxims, that serves to make possible the kinds of meaningful and necessary inferences of another's intended meanings even when the words don't literally denote that meaning. The above exchange between A and B about their acquaintance, Smith, is a meaningful exchange rather than a mere sequence of disconnected remarks at least partly because of A's and B's mutual action of cooperatively participating in the exchange:

The co-operative principle:

Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (p. 26)

In general, what we have is a theory of how people "use" language in order to make possible their interpretation of each other's utterances via a background knowledge of the relevant context. Pragmatic principles aid contextual interpretation by providing criteria, like that of the cooperative principle, for delimiting some of the possible hypotheses we might entertain about another's intended meanings. One simply begins with those hypotheses most compatible with the cooperative principle, or, perhaps, by rejecting those hypotheses that are incompatible with it. Pragmatic principles that indicate how we are able to determine the relevant context for discourse interpretation would be necessary to supplement any descriptively adequate linguistic theory of competence, with Chomsky's theory being an example here.

Four basic maxims, or general principles, along with some sub-maxims have been identified by Grice as what must be minimally presupposed by an efficient co-operative use of language. The four maxims together serve to realize or instantiate cooperative discourse.

Echoing some of Kant's terminology¹, Grice (1967/89) refers to these maxims as follows:

1. The Maxim of Quantity

- a. make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
- b. do not make your contribution more informative than is required. (p. 26)

2. The Maxim of Quality

- Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:
- (i) do not say what you believe to be false.
 - (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. (p. 27)

3. The Maxim of Relation

Make your contribution relevant. (p. 27)

4. The Maxim of Manner

- (i) avoid obscurity.
- (ii) avoid ambiguity.
- (iii) be brief.
- (iv) be orderly. (p. 27)

¹ In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant offers the conclusion that all thinking involves synthesis (i.e., construction) in accordance with a rule and that it is the rule which gives unity to the act of construction. Grice, in a similar manner, is claiming that all discourse interpretation requires inferences according to the cooperative rule and that it is this rule which enables us to infer implied meanings beyond what is merely given by the explicit semantic content of what is said. Grice also, in a manner echoing Kant, holds that his elucidation of the cooperative rule and its four maxims are prior to understanding in general by any intelligent beings wishing to communicate with language. That is, just as Kant's categories can be understood as preconditions or necessary prerequisites for conceptual thought about things in the world, Grice's maxims can be seen as that without which the kind of intelligible conversation we have, or any rational being might have, with each other would not be possible. This explains why the maxims are expressed as imperatives, as regulative rules and not as constitutive rules. They don't define what counts as a conversation, but what rationally regulates efficient conversation. Grice's maxims are not arbitrary or evolved conventions but universal principles required or imposed by the rational objective of efficient but flexible and creative communication. As Taylor & Cameron (1987) have therefore noted, it is the authoritative force behind Gricean principles of conversation that gives them the sort of imperative sense that they may have; otherwise "they amount to no more than general descriptions of conversational behaviour, in which their imperative formulation is bizarre" (p. 95).

At first blush these maxims could be seen as kinds of implicit rules for clear, efficient communication, not unlike the abecedarian rules of good composition one finds in grammar books. But Grice does more than educe a touchstone of clear communication. For Grice, these maxims serve as necessary presuppositions for conversational understanding such that whenever possible people will interpret what is said as more or less conforming to the maxims and thereby be guided as to how to "read in" more than what the words alone denote.

I would like to be able to think of the standard type of conversational practice not merely as something that all or most do *in fact* follow but as something that it is *reasonable* for us to follow, that we *should not* abandon. (Grice, 1967/89, p. 29)

In that they allow understanders to systematically "read-in" more than what a verbal or written utterance denotes on a conventional or literal level, conversational implicatures can be seen as an heuristic. Such added implications become so automatic that it is very difficult to disentangle them from the purely literal, conventional or logical meanings of the words. Implied or implicated meaning must of course somehow follow, but not necessarily in a direct or literal manner, from what is said (the explicit). The implied remains underdetermined by what is explicitly said and correct interpretation therefore becomes more probable by the application of contextual assumptions involving what the speaker said together with the presumption that the speaker is also observing certain presuppositions and maxims of conversation.

Examples of the necessity of some sort of pragmatic inference for much of our everyday conversation include such things as the speaker's referent (who does "she" in "she is tired" refer to?) or even our everyday but "fuzzy" qualifiers. The quantifier "some," for example, means "at least 1 and possibly all" for a logician. Logic students may make mistakes here simply because "some" for them in their everyday usage more commonly means "some and not all" as in "some people are just plain unlucky." This usage in everyday conversation can be explained by reference to the maxim of quantity. The two meanings of "some" can be seen as two scalar predicates forming an order by the degree of

"informativeness" or semantic strength. The logician's "some" is of broader scope while the everyday usage of "some" is of a narrower or weaker scope. The general strategy for interpretation would be to infer that if the weaker point on the scale obtains then we are to understand that the stronger point does not obtain, or that the speaker is not certain that the stronger point obtains. In everyday usage of the qualifier "some," the weaker notion of "some but not all" is employed and if the stronger sense of "at least 1 and possibly all" is to be implied then by the same maxim of quantity the speaker is obliged to add some additional words of qualification to his or her use of the word "some." Students of logic, then, must learn to overcome this habit of our natural language and adopt a new conversational convention established for this more specialized academic discourse where "some" is now to be understood in its larger extension unless qualified to indicate that a reduced extension obtains.

An example of the potential contribution to psychology of Grice's theory is to be found in a re-assessment of Tversky and Kahneman's (1982) conjunction fallacy. Dulany and Hilton (1991) demonstrated that the conjunction fallacy is only partly due to an obvious failure in recognizing that with the conjunction of two events (A & B), their joint probability, cannot be larger than the individual probability of either of its constituent events (A or B). It turns out that not all of the apparent conjunction effect can be attributed to the representativeness heuristic's being so overwhelming that people then commit a fallacy. Rather, Dulany and Hilton's study suggests that the well-known example of "Linda is a bank teller" (T) being estimated as less probable than "Linda is a bank teller and is active in the feminist movement" (T & F)--when presented with a previous background description of Linda as a social activist--is actually due to a combination of both conversational implicatures and the representativeness heuristic. That the representativeness heuristic is at play is not in question, but that it works to produce an error in the reasoner's inferential operations is not necessarily evident. To interpret, for instance, that "Linda is T" to mean

that "Linda is T & (not F)" would actually absolve one of fallacious reasoning as such when choosing T & F as the more probable statement. Interpreting "Linda is T" to mean that "Linda is T & (F or not F)" does not absolve one of having committed the conjunction fallacy proper, assuming that the conjunction fallacy is defined as precisely this kind of error. But by simply asking people how they might have interpreted the question, Dulany and Hilton have provided evidence that the incidence of a genuine conjunction fallacy in reasoning occurs between 0% to 38% of the time. This is quite a marked contrast from Tversky and Kahneman's estimate that it occurs between 85% to 90% of the time. There is, of course, a justified skepticism towards the belief that verbal reports pertain to our higher order cognitive processes (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). Nonetheless, it can be argued that the methodological assumption in Dulany and Hilton's study of operative interpretation that the question is sufficiently represented in momentary consciousness is perhaps no less implausible than the assumption that judgements of likelihood themselves can be so represented and therefore measured through self-reports.

In the field of questionnaire design the effects of inadvertently sequencing a non-ambiguous question followed by one that requires interpretation has been shown by Strack, Schwarz & Wanke (1991) to partly determine the interpretation of that ambiguous question. Features of the surface context, like priming, response set, social desirability, and perceived consistency, have been studied. Less well studied have been the pragmatic inferences or implicatures that might occur when there exists a perceived episodic or intended relationship between the two questions. Strack and his associates differentiate the priming effect from the pragmatic effect by noting that priming concentrates on the semantic content so that the context is merely a factor that exerts its influence upon memory or attention. That is, priming simply pertains to the contingency of recently or frequently activated ideas which makes for an encoding bias in the interpretation and perception of, or arousal to, a subsequent stimulus. No contextually intended meanings need to exist between the

activated idea and the subsequent stimulus. In contrast, a pragmatic effect pertains to how respondents incorporate the conversational context itself into the interpretation of a speaker's intended meanings. As Strack et al. (1991) have put it, the pragmatic perspective "emphasizes the social context as a necessary source of information and demonstrates that the process of understanding remains deficient if the context of an utterance is removed" (p. 114). At the pragmatic level of discourse, therefore, we have essentially a particular focus upon the prerequisite structure of the social context as a necessary source of information for dialogal understanding.

To illustrate the distinction between priming and the pragmatic effect, Strack et al. (1991) had participants rate both their "happiness" and their "satisfaction" with life as a whole in two separate questions. While neither term is "semantically" ambiguous, the concrete exemplification of these terms remains underdetermined. If two similar questions about oneself are perceived to be episodically related and originating from the same speaker (author), then the semantic similarity of the questions in this kind of conversational context would challenge the maxim of *non-redundancy*. A method for preserving the assumption of discourse cooperation would be to reconsider how the questions could conceivably be asking something quite different. The respondent assumes that the questioner is not being redundant but is sensibly asking for new information when asking this second question, in spite of its semantic similarity to the first. The priming effect would not predict this. Strack et al. (1991) contrived two experimental conditions. In the *context condition* the two questions were made to be seen as episodically related by having them placed contiguously and introduced by the covering sentence, "Now, we have two questions about your life." In the *no context condition* the two questions were made to be seen as independent from each other. The "happiness with life in general" question was asked at the end of the first questionnaire preceded by the lead-in, "Now we have a question about your life." The life-satisfaction question was asked at the beginning of the next, and seemingly unrelated, questionnaire. In

this contextless condition, the questions were still contiguously adjacent, in order to allow for a priming effect, but now contextually separate. The correlation between people's responses to the two questions was .96 in the no-context condition, but only .75 in the context condition, thereby confirming that there is indeed a priming effect and a separate influence that operates by affording a pragmatic inference about the intended meaning.

IV. THE CONCEPTUAL SELF AS SUBJECT FOR DISCLOSURE

The notion of the conceptual "self" has been interpreted as a generalized self-conception (Burke, Kraut & Dworkin, 1984), schema (Neisser, 1976; Markus, 1977), or sediment of self-referential perceptions and meanings (James, 1890/1950; Mead, 1935; Calkins, 1915; Rogers, 1961; Epstein, 1973). In general, self-knowledge and the affect attached to that self-knowledge are seen as important for managing information about ourselves in some way similar to how we manage information about other people (Markus and Sentis, 1982). The representations that people have of themselves appear in some ways to be similar to how we remember and use other concepts, although there are clearly differences in complexity (Rogers, 1981; Kuiper, 1981; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Breckler et al., 1990; Kihlstrom and Cantor, 1984) and structure (Rogers, Kuiper & Rogers, 1979). In any case, the general view remains that such cognitive-affective structures guide our understanding of self-relevant information which in turn facilitates how we interpret situations for ourselves. This cognitive organization of self-descriptions is thought to be important for certain functions of social interaction and information processing.

All this might suggest that our talk about ourselves has a constancy or coherence greater than that given by our immediate perceptions of how we feel or think about ourselves in any particular situation. If our conversations or statements to others about ourselves are corroborative interactions (Schegloff, 1982; Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986) rather than autonomous self-reports, then what is said will of course vary with whoever is present (Block, 1952) and the immediate social context. How the other is perceived and understood, what their interests might be in hearing about another, bears on what one is going to report.

It has been argued that the various self-images and expressions that may be employed for a given situation are not to be confused with the more enduring, albeit multifaceted self-concept that "is carried about in the head from situation to situation" (Turner, 1982). The assumption of much research upon the "self" was that a

decontextualized reportage and some grasp of the elusive generalized and socially-protean self would be possible. The present study assumes that if indeed all conversations between people are relational and corroborative, then laying hold of something essential and universal about a person's self-concept independent of the situation that includes the experimenters themselves, is simply not possible. What is obtained is a particular discourse about oneself, a discourse that could well vary even in the controlled situation of experimental research. The task then would be to attempt to determine what range of variability in reportage is possible while ensuring that our comparisons of group differences do indeed take into account the relevant constancy not only of the physical, but also of the interpersonal context.

For instance, one of the persistent metaphors about people's talk about themselves is that of "depth" (Altman and Taylor, 1973). Research on self-disclosure has shown that there are conventions about what to disclose and when, as for instance indicated by there being a commensurate increase in personal self-disclosures (Gelman and McGinley, 1978) as an interpersonal relationship develops over time. It is not the case that any disclosure of intimate details is going to make one attractive as timing and context are important (Derlega and Grzelak, 1979). Reciprocity is another convention and one that has been used by therapists in a somewhat instrumental manner to further an increase of intimacy and self-disclosure from a client (Jourard, 1968). People reveal themselves, as it were, at different levels of intimacy which may or may not be correlated with the closeness felt with another (Tolstedt and Stokes, 1984). While this is not the only dimension of people's self-understandings, it is one that varies with the perceived status of the listener. The maximum permitted depth or personal nature of what is to be disclosed to another varies with the nature of one's social relationship with that other. "Close" friends, of course, are granted more intimate statements about oneself than strangers.

Research on the self-concept has frequently employed questionnaires of various sorts ranging from Q-sorts and inventories, where specific categories or self-rating scales are

provided, to more open-ended measures where the participants are free to determine spontaneously for themselves the relevant dimensions and categories of self-description. The latter approach is best exemplified by simply asking the very direct but open-ended question "who are you?" (WAY), or some variation of this request, like "tell us about yourself." Experimental participants are asked either to verbalize or to simply write out for themselves some statements in response to these enquiries. The advantage of such a method is that the spontaneous complexity and richness of self-descriptions can be allowed free expression with a minimal interference from the researcher or bridling from the participant.

A half century of research using this approach to elicit what are thought to be core statements highly revelatory of a person's singular self-conceptions has surprisingly not taken into account the embedded linguistic context of the worded enquiries themselves as a direct influence upon that which is revealed. A pragmatic approach to language usage would be more sensitive to the implicit context contained in a rephrasing of what is thought to be essentially the same question or enquiry. For this reason, the dependent variable in my first and second proposed experiments is a comparison of answers to some allied versions of these WAY type of enquiries.

A. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE WAY QUESTIONNAIRES AND THE ESSENTIALIST NOTION OF THE SELF

1. An Open-ended Measure of the Conceptual Self

The "who are you" questionnaire, referred to by the acronym WAY, was first introduced by Bugental and Zelen in 1950, and is still in use today, along with many variants. The questionnaire procedure originally consisted of simply giving the experimental participants a blank sheet of paper and asking them to write three answers to the question, "Who are you?" Four years later, a variation that was to become known as the Twenty Sentences Test (TST) was introduced by Kuhn and McPartland (1954) where volunteers were

now asked to write 20 one-sentence answers to the question, "*Who am I?*" A current version employed by Frances Aboud and Shelagh Skerry (1983) at McGill University is worded as follows, "*I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself. Tell me what you are, who you are.*" Participants in this version do not have to write down their answers but are stopped after giving only 5 attributes if they are kindergartners and not permitted to stop until 20 to 30 attributes have been verbalized if they are university students .

William McGuire and Alice Padawer-Singer (1976) used what they refer to as "a general self-concept item" to elicit a so-called "spontaneous self-concept." Their modification consists of the allied WAY type probe, "*Tell us about yourself*" which is printed at the top of an otherwise blank, lined paper. Volunteers were given 7 minutes to write down all the things about themselves that they thought of, along with the instruction to write each new thing on a new line as they thought of it. In subsequent research, McGuire (1984) expedites administration and scoring of the questionnaire by reducing the time from 7 minutes to 5 minutes.

2. The Assumptions of the WAY

Now, what is the rationale behind this most oddly open-ended request for a self-disquisition which is either temporally delimited (i.e., "tell us about yourself in 5 minutes") or verbally delimited (i.e., "make only twenty statements about who you are")? Given the general notion that the self-concept is simply the "sum of descriptions one would take to be true of oneself" (Thalberg, 1986), the problem for researchers is that such a sum might well be inexhaustible or unmanageably prolix. This problem, however, is thought to be resolved by the further assumption that people regard certain features of themselves as more fundamental or central than others and that it will be these descriptions that will be most readily reported due to their availability. As noted by Wylie (1974), some researchers

assumed that the order of responses on the WAY would reflect the salience of those responses in a person's self-concept.

Hence, it was reasoned that some of those central self-conceptions could be elicited by simply asking people to describe themselves when not compelled to answer in any particular manner (via open-ended questions) but nevertheless constrained to select what is most central. This latter condition was thought to be achieved by the imposed exigency of a spatial and temporal limit to description. For example, one was to give only a finite number of statements in answer to the experimental question or alternatively, write as many statements as one wished on a single piece of paper within a 5-minute time limit. Such conditions, it was thought, would provide people with the best possible chance to express what is most important or salient about themselves in their own way.

Now, I do not wish to suggest any objection to these types of WAY questionnaires when used for within-situation comparisons between groups of people and where we can assume that everyone is going to interpret the experimental question in a similar manner. What is at issue is the tendency to make explicit, or at least implicit, essentialist claims ignoring the ineluctable contextual nature of any questioning of one to another. Kuhn and McPartland (1954), for example, confidently concluded that role or social membership categories "are at the top of the hierarchy of self-attitudes" (p. 75). Of course, such universal claims are desirable, but this presupposes a decontextualized questionnaire. Indeed, the WAY questionnaire is far from being as "open-ended" as has been presumed.

The WAY is a call for an explicit determination of oneself to another. Simply stating one's name would be insufficient as the "pragmatic convenience of proper names in our language lies precisely in the fact that they enable us to refer publicly to objects without being forced to raise issues and come to an agreement as to which descriptive characteristics exactly constitute the identity of the object" (Searle, 1967, p. 491). Proper names admit all predicates and serve only as pegs with which to hang descriptions. The WAY asks for

explicit description. In the experimental situation very few people actually put down their name. Even when elementary children are asked the cognate question, "tell us about yourself," only 2% respond by giving their name.

In a different situation, like that of speaking over the phone, someone could ask, "who are you," and the expected answer is not a self-description but rather a convenient identifier. Any cognomen, appellation or even an identity number will do, as long as it is an official tag and one that is used with consistency. In our society it is our surname that serves this purpose but in prison it is one's prison number. Such labels serve only as references not as descriptions.

The question then is not context free nor completely "open-ended" even with respect to what is being asked. Proper names are barred in some situations but not in others. Perhaps it is the case that no question really is completely open-ended, only that the range of permissible answers is greater with an open-ended question than with a fixed response question.

For clarification of this issue, it might be useful to keep in mind J. L. Austin's (1962/1975) distinction of the locutionary and illocutionary force of a statement. As already noted, a central tenet in pragmatics is that to speak is not merely to say something but to do something. What the words simply say, their semantic sense and reference, has been referred to as their locutionary force. But it is the illocutionary act that can be seen as investing those words with some contextually dependent communicative intent so that the very same words, "who are you," can serve such different roles as a request, a friendly bit of banter, or even an insult. In the present context of the WAY questionnaire, we have a request for self-disclosure but there still remains a potential range whereby the question can serve as either a general request for social identity or a request for a very personal self-disclosure. A person on a phone asking "who are you" is likely not asking for a self-

disquisition but for a proper name or identifier. The illocutionary act changes from one of a request for self-description to one of a request for social identification.

3. McGuire's Notion of the Spontaneous Self

William McGuire (1984) has demonstrated the influence of the external context, particularly social settings, upon people's self-expressions. From this he has concluded that ". . . one's phenomenal sense of self will change in predictable ways as one moves from one social setting to another" (1984, p. 85). McGuire demonstrated, for instance, that a more frequent mention of one's gender or race will be made when participants complete the questionnaire in the presence of members of the opposite sex or a different race, especially when they are the majority (salience hypothesis). In the very same paper, McGuire asserts the following conclusion:

. . . only 5 - 10% of the material that people report in response to a nondirective "tell us about yourself" probe is explicitly self-evaluation. . . . Self-esteem deserves some attention but it is excessive to devote over 90% of the self-concept research to this single dimension that accounts for less than 10% of subjective self-space content. (p. 88-9)

A curious aspect of McGuire's observation is the apparent lapse into a kind of essentialist claim that the self-evaluative dimension or content of people's self-descriptions only accounts for "10% of subjective self-space content." It seems that McGuire reproves the excessive attention the field has given to this dimension of our self-talk because he believes self-evaluation to be only a small dimension of our phenomenal sense of ourselves.

It is understandable and inherent to the discipline of psychology that psychologists, even as they themselves successfully demonstrate the situational nature of people's self-descriptions, would nevertheless seek out certain universals or near universals. Trans-situational claims about human behaviour and mentation are inherently more interesting, if only for their generalizability, than congeries of descriptions of human performances varying for each and every situation. Warnings against too quickly finding some trans-contextual constancies in the content of people's self-descriptions were first voiced by the key innovator of the WAY, Manford Kuhn. In discussing the inherent problems in the measurement of "self attitudes" through questionnaires, Kuhn and a co-author (Hickman & Kuhn, 1956) duly

cautioned that along with the problem of suggesting responses to the respondent, and the problem of proper item selection, there was also the:

. . . possibility that the self attitudes elicited will have too high a degree of specificity--that is, that they will be relevant only to a highly limited situation, particularly the situation in which the test is being administered. (p. 243)

Of course, Kuhn's training as a sociologist in the symbolic-interactionist school helps to account for his emphasis upon the "specific interactionist context." The search for psychological universals, or at least generalities, by psychologists similarly accounts for the search for essentialist claims even when the situated nature of self-description itself is being researched.

Even Kuhn himself can be seen to compromise his own contextualism when he implicitly assumes that responses to his variant of the WAY, namely the TST, will be reflective of people's self-attitudes in situations other than just the testing situation. Kuhn and Hickman were quite confident that all three of these problems had been successfully overcome by Kuhn and McPartland's TST. The terseness of the "Who am I" question was thought to minimize the possibilities of suggestion "to the vanishing point" (*ibid.*, p. 243). The sweeping open-endedness of the "who am I" question was thought to be sufficiently inclusive to encompass any of the contents of people's self-concept while at the same time minimizing the risk of situational cueing that such a question might possess.

B. METHODOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF THE WAY

1.. A pragmatic approach to discourse understanding entails at least three groups of allied assumptions which we can summarize as follows:

- a. Discourse is systematic, sequential, inferential and interpretative .
- b. Discourse is intentional and is jointly negotiated in a corroborative manner between speakers, and even between speakers and hearers.
- c. Discourse is conventional and involves commonsense knowledge.

While social-psychological perspectives attempt to account for behaviours in situations not completely structured, cultural-institutional views assume structured or rigidly normative situations. Between these two extremes, pragmatics can be seen to offer a bridging position. Indeed, it is possible that this model of human discourse as intentional action in context may aid in our efforts to disambiguate what psychologists often vaguely and confusedly designate as the influence either of belief and attitude or of context and situation upon behaviours. This approach, with its implied model of the person as an active agent and interpreter of her experiences and communications, may at least serve to sensitize us to the nuances of our communications with, and misunderstandings of, our clinical clients or our experimental volunteers.

The importance of such nuances of communication may well be illustrated with how the WAY questionnaire and its allied versions elicit different content from people when they interpret the questionnaire as requesting different kinds of self-disclosure. Experimental participants are faced with the static context of written questionnaire instructions from the experimenter and are required to derive their understanding of how to cooperate from the static context of those instructions. Participants must attempt to make some inferences about what the experimenter is implying as to how and what to corroborate in this oddly situated request for self-disclosure.

But how should one answer? A person's conceptual self is not like a thing with fixed qualities and well-defined attributes, but is a complex and potentially infinite set of relational and fluid descriptors that only become a sub-set of reasonable things to ascribe to oneself for the purpose of reporting something "relevant" to a given other. The experimenter remains a kind of faceless abstraction and all that the participants have for constructing what might be the concrete person to whom they provide such a self-disclosure is their background knowledge of psychological experimenters and their experiments and the brief but terse words of the experimenter in the form of the questionnaire instructions. The status

of experimenters and the willing cooperativeness of volunteers suggests that the Gricean maxims of quality and quantity would not be questioned but in fact be judged to have a more than normal pertinence. What Haviland and Clark (1974) called their *bridging hypothesis* was simply the fact that individuals must relate texts to their prior knowledge. In the case at hand, which prior knowledge must our participants attempt to draw upon as relevant for making a self-disquisition that is in turn relevant to their sense of what is going on and being asked of them?

Certainly, cultural conventions of self-presentation are an important consideration (Paranjpe, 1975; Bond & Tak-sing, 1983). Cousins (1989), for instance, compared the type of responses made to the Twenty Statements Test version of the WAY by Japanese students in Tokyo with those of American students in Michigan. It was found that the responses of the Japanese students, as compared to American students, included a greater proportion of the more abstract, universal self-references (e.g., "a living form") to the WAY question. American students in Michigan made greater use of purely psychological attributes (e.g., "I am easygoing") in their self-descriptions, while the Japanese students made a greater reference to their social relations (e.g., "I am in the gymnastics club"), regular activities (e.g., "one who swims often"), physical characteristics (e.g., "I am 167 cm tall"), preferences (e.g., "one who likes animals"), wishes (e.g., "hoping to get a driver's licence"). In order to take into account the greater demands of social context explicitly defining social behaviour for the Japanese, Cousins adroitly included a more contextualized free-response questionnaire which instructed participants to "Describe yourself in the following situations." The situations listed were: "at home," "with close friends," and "at school." Interestingly, results from the explicitly contextualized request for a self-description for a particular situation resulted in a virtual reversal of the Japanese versus American proportions of unqualified psychological attributes. As "relational actors," it now made sense to the Japanese students to talk about themselves as being, for instance, "diligent" in school.

The implication of this kind of finding is that the context for self-description is not something given to everyone in the same manner. There are certainly cultural differences in a given context, but we can also conceive of a given context supporting a number of possible assumptions on our part about the nature of the context itself and what may or may not be its directives for appropriate action.

C. THE RELEVANCY HYPOTHESIS

Grice's maxim of "relation" simply argues that people cooperate in achieving meaningful communication by restricting their contributions to what is relevant or appropriate to the immediate needs of the discourse at hand. But what helps to determine relevancy in the first place? Sperber and Wilson (1986a) attempt to flesh this out in the cognitive terms of effect and effort. The relevance that any particular inference has for a given context is going to be deemed large "to the extent that its contextual effects are large" (p. 125) In addition, the relevance of any inference is going to be deemed large "to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small" (p. 125). Something is relevant for a given context, then, to the extent that it easily elaborates upon and connects up with context. Such an assessment of relevance is thus thought to occur by a balancing of cognitive gain with effort.

This is probably as good a provisional working definition of relevance as any, but it is misleading to suggest that people seek maximal relevance only in terms of the "maximal cognitive effect for minimal processing effort" (Sperber and Wilson, 1986b). People's search for relevance is likely more complex than this, as suggested by the fact we do not always seek the maximum amount of information for any one context. For instance, decision-making is often facilitated or indecision overcome by a strategic blindness or narrowing of what is to be taken as relevant.

If the researcher asks his participants questions, those questions are of course going to be understood as somehow of import for whatever it is that psychologists *qua* psychologists do. What might otherwise be odd questions in everyday situations become expected and appropriate if asked by a researcher. Similarly, questions that might well have a straightforward or mundane meaning outside the psychological experiment can now assume new meanings. When psychologists ask people about themselves, then how people respond might well be confounded with what they think is being asked of them.

Participants responding to the WAY find themselves in a situation designed to minimally suggest how they are to answer this kind of question. They do know that they have voluntarily opted to at least try to answer the question in a manner that somehow satisfies or is relevant to the scientific research goals of those who designed the questionnaire. Not having specific information as to what those goals might be, as would be given if the experimental hypothesis were to be revealed beforehand, participants must attempt to infer as well as they can how to "appropriately" answer the question. Since there is no end to what they can possibly say about themselves, participants must find some criterion of relevant selection and organization to guide how they are to respond.

Partly to help put people at ease and to elicit uncensored responses, research assistants might tell participants of the WAY or one of its variants that there are no right or wrong answers and that they should respond freely with whatever comes to mind in attempting to answer the question. This kind of instruction may indeed help to alleviate people's worries about "failing" or "succeeding" on what is still perceived to be a test of some sort. People frequently ask during individual debriefings how they did, the hopeful expectation being that the "psychological researchers" can tell them something interesting or insightful about themselves. The hope of receiving personal psychological feedback could well be part of the attraction of participating in a psychology experiment.

The usual assumption on the part of psychologists in using this kind of instrument to measure people's self-attitudes and self-conceptualization is that selection and organization of participants' statements about themselves on the questionnaire is primarily supplied by those same self-attitudes and self-conceptualizations. This has to be seriously questioned if it turns out that subtle contextual influences brought about by the very situation designed to avoid such effects nevertheless profoundly affect how people describe themselves.

We could simply relegate the problem at hand to the category of experimental demand characteristics. The disadvantage of doing this is that we shift attention away from the general interpretative nature of social discourse and place emphasis primarily upon what might be peculiar to the "special form of social interaction known as 'taking part in an experiment'" (Orne, 1977, p. 5). For some social psychologists (Orne, 1962, 1969; Sarason & Minard, 1963; Rosenthal, 1969), the social nature of the typical psychology experiment is quite unusual and unique, making for results peculiar to this situation. The external validity, or what some refer to as the "ecological validity," of the psychology experiment is thus compromised by the kinds of unique social interactions that may in fact be partly or even wholly responsible for the obtained results. The extent to which the unique social context of the psychology experiment restricts the ecological validity of the experiment would in principle require empirical determination after the fact. There is little in the way of theory to permit a prior way of determining how people might construe the context of participating in a psychology experiment. Alternatively, the pragmatic approach here proposed at least provides a research focus upon the shared assumptions that may exist between the parties.

At this point, we could invoke a comprehension model of discourse interpretation like that of Sanford and Gorrod (1981), Bransford and his colleagues (Bransford and McCarrel, 1977; Bransford and Franks, 1971), or van Dijk and Kintsch (1983). The common thesis behind these various models of general textual understanding is that an integration occurs

by way of fitting what is read into preexisting frames or general schemas. I want to here invoke an idea that is compatible with such general notions, but more modest:

Background knowledge relevant for the participants facing a WAY type of questionnaire includes previous conversational prototypes in which they might have been asked, similarly, to provide a disquisition about themselves.

V. EXPERIMENT 1

This experiment attempted to lend support to the view that the manner in which people respond to a WAY type of *request for self-description* or *probe* is going to be readily influenced not only by obvious changes in the semantics of the probe for self-description, but even by minor changes in the semantic content and syntactic form of the probes. The "Who are you?" and the "Tell us about yourself" probes have been seen as similar kinds of probes for collecting information about a person's self-concept. The insertion of the prepositional phrase, "about your view of," into McGuire's "Tell us about yourself" request could be expected to make for only a little difference, if any, in how people would proceed to describe themselves. Alternatively, if we ask people to "Tell us what you are not," the semantic reversal in what is being asked for would be expected to make for a marked difference in people's responses to this kind of request.

Since the wording carries with it an implied associated context, indirectly changing the context by changing the wording of these probes for self-disquisition is predicted to greatly influence what people disclose and how they construct their self-descriptions. When these probes are administered in the somewhat foreign context of the "psychology experiment," even the most subtle rewordings of the probes should have been influential, especially if the reworded request for self-description carries with it an additional meaning of being normatively associated with quite different types of situations. In situations outside that of the psychology experiment, such requests for self-description might be more familiar or likely events of everyday life. Experimental participants seek a fuller interpretation of the experimental context than is, or can be, provided by the experimenter. Given that the norms of self-disquisition in a psychology experiment are less well defined for people than what is encountered in everyday conversations, the context interpretation strategy that participants

are predicted to employ would be simply to answer the request for self-disquisition as one normally might were that same request situated in its more familiar context.

The variants of the WAY chosen and devised, were assumed to be comparatively more suitable for certain situations than for others. Asking the question "who are you?" is something one does with strangers or expects from strangers. Familiar friends do not need to ask this kind of question of each other. Being asked to "Give us your honest assessment of yourself" is something one can more readily conceive of as being possible and appropriate in a psychotherapy situation than it would be if it were asked by a complete stranger. How one talks about oneself to strangers is naturally going to be quite different from how one talks about oneself to a psychotherapist, if one does have occasion to do so, particularly in terms of content.

Since the research question here is concerned with the interactive nature of people's self-descriptions, the following experiments will investigate only three established WAY variants, particularly McGuire's variant since he does forward an astonishing claim about the universality of how people structure their "spontaneous self." Three alternative variants will here also be explored. Kuhn and McPartland's earlier "Who am I?" variant is not something one asks of another but is posed as a question one asks to oneself. This kind of probe is unnatural insofar as it is being asked by another and yet is being addressed to the first person ("I") rather than the second person ("you"). This question violates norms of address and would therefore complicate the comparison of similar WAY variants that do employ more natural forms of interlocutionary address.

In this experiment, differences in how people responded to any of the WAY variants was measured by the total number of discrete self-descriptions provided and by the proportion of those responses which were of a self-evaluative nature. Besides being a key category in McGuire's research, the "evaluative" dimension has long been a recurrent category for both the fixed response instruments and the open response methods of the WAY

probes. As Spitzer, Stratton, Fitzgerald, and Mach (1966) argued, the self-evaluative dimension "(which subsumes disturbance, derogation, and satisfaction) is closest to the general construct of self-acceptance" which in turn is thought to be an important determinant of behaviour. Bugental and Zelen's (1950) original WAY technique and later elaborations (Bugental, 1964) included a general combined grouping of people's free responses into five "homogeneous groups" that purported to be "indexes," one of which was called "the affectively toned index." This index simply enumerated the number of self-approving, self-disapproving or ambivalently toned references to oneself.

While the scoring here is being limited to the self-evaluative dimension, thus restricting what can be said about the whole instrument, the importance that has been given to the self-evaluative dimension does make the self-evaluative a prime candidate upon which to test our hypothesis. The self-evaluative dimension has also been thought more relevant for inferring psychological aspects of people's self-conceptions than would, say, Bugental and Zelen's "census index" which pertains to census type self-descriptions. More pertinent to the hypothesis here being proposed, situations of varying interpersonal intimacy have different allowances for the amount and intimacy of self-disclosure.

From the general hypothesis that inferences about the intended application of prototypic conversational occurrences of past self-disclosures will influence how people will describe themselves when asked to do so, three experimental predictions were formulated:

1. With a minor change in wording in what can be thought to be allied forms of requests for disclosure of a person's self-concept, the percentage of self-evaluative statements can be increased or decreased.
2. The proportion of self-evaluative statements will be commensurate with the prototypic situation in which the probe is more commonly located. The more

intimate the prototypic situation, the greater the proportion of self-evaluative statements that a person will make.

3. The less familiar the probe, the fewer will be the total number of independent self-descriptions given.

A. METHOD

1. Materials and design

The original "who are you?" question as formulated by Bugental was written at the top of an unlined blank sheet of paper. McGuire's rewording of this request as, "Tell us about yourself," and four other different variants (see table 2) of the WAY type of probe were also located at the top of separate blank sheets of paper. Instructions to the respondents remained the same for all six of these WAY types of self-report instruments or *questionnaires*. Instructions were printed on the other side of the page and read as follows:

This is a study on how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a statement. (Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the instruction). Your task is to respond to this statement with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses.

People were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire and were assured that no one would know who had filled out a given questionnaire. The six questionnaires were administered to 180 participants, each participant being asked to complete the one distributed WAY type of questionnaire they were randomly given.

Five of the six requests for self-description (see table 2) were assumed to be requests that people would conceive as being more appropriately asked in certain situations as compared to others.

table 2

TYPE OF WAY QUESTION AND CORRESPONDING SITUATION WHERE SUCH A QUESTION IS APPROPRIATE

WAY TYPE OF QUESTIONS	CORRESPONDING SITUATION
1. "Who are you?"	a. A stranger knocking on one's door.
2. "Tell us about yourself."	b. A job interview.
3. "Tell us about your view of yourself."	c. An intimate conversation with a friends.
4. "Tell us what is central to your view of yourself."	c. An intimate conversation with friends.
5. "Give us your honest assessment of how you view yourself."	d. A psychotherapy-session.
6 "Tell us what you are not."	e. A philosophy discussion group.

The "Tell us about your view of yourself" and the "Tell us what is central to your view of yourself" were thought to be best associated with the same kind of situation, namely that of being engaged in "an intimate conversation with a friend." The other four requests were hypothesized to have a different context of appropriateness, as shown in table 2. To partly test this assumption, a different sample of 70 volunteers were asked to match a subset of 5 of the requests for self-description to one of the five listed situations thought to be "most appropriate for the asking of such a question." Results of this matching (table 3) confirmed there to be a high degree of correspondence between the probe and the situation thought to be most suitable for its occurrence outside of the psychology experiment.

table 3

PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS MATCHING REQUESTS WITH SITUATIONS

	STRANGER KNOCKS	JOB INTERVIEW	INTIMATE FRIEND	PSYCHO- THERAPY	PHILOS GROUP
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
WHO ARE YOU?	95.7	0.0	0.0	2.9	1.4
TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF	1.4	44.3	17.1	28.6	8.6
TELL US ABOUT YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF	0.0	21.4	38.6	20.0	20.0
GIVE US YOUR HONEST ASSESSMENT OF YOURSELF	1.4	25.7	25.7	42.9	4.3
TELL US WHAT YOU ARE NOT	1.4	8.6	18.6	5.7	65.7

This same set of 70 volunteers were also asked to rank order each of 5 WAY types of requests on a 5-point scale with respect to "how familiar or common" they thought such requests for self-description would be. This task was included in order to test the third hypothesis listed above.

2. Coding scheme

The present study made use of the coding scheme developed by McGuire & Padawer-Singer (1976). Statements on the protocols were divided into discrete thought units that expressed only one attribution of, or idea about, the self. Each of these separate units was counted as one response and was independently categorized by three judges as to whether or not they fell under the "self-evaluation" category or not. Self-evaluative statements refer to any explicit evaluations of oneself as being, for example, "a nice person," "physically weak,"

"smart," "emotionally stable," and so on. A response was coded as self-evaluative if it stated a moral, physical, intellectual or emotional evaluation of oneself. If the thought unit only expressed something about the person's demographic or physical characteristics, their activities, their attitudes, something about school or other people, or simply did not fit any of the given categories, it was coded as non-evaluative.

Three judges separately evaluated the discrete thought units in the protocols to record the total number of evaluative self-statements for each protocol. The particular probe printed at the top of the protocols was folded back so as to ensure that the judges would be blind as to which probe elicited the responses they were to code. Coding reliability for each protocol's proportion of assigned evaluative responses reached a $r = .84$ between the author and one of the assistants, and between the two assistants the protocol assignments reached a $r = .83$. The proportion of evaluative statements recorded for each protocol by each of the three judges was combined into a single average rating.

3. Subjects

The 180 participants for study came from undergraduate classes in psychology at SFU. With the permission of the instructor, students were asked at the end of the class if they would volunteer to fill out a short questionnaire taking only about 5 minutes to complete. Students who opted to participate were given one of the WAY type questionnaires with the instructions facing up. Median age was 20 with the first and third quartiles being 18 and 22 respectively. 57% of the participants were female.

A second set of 70 undergraduate students were solicited in the same manner and asked to complete the above described matching task and the ranking task.

B. RESULTS

In table 4 we see a dramatic reversal of the proportion of self-evaluative statements between question 2 (McGuire's probe) and question 3 ("Tell us about your view of yourself"). This slight variation in the wording of McGuire's probe resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of evaluative self-descriptions. This result provides some support for the first experimental hypothesis, but not without ambiguity as to whether the effect was a result of the connotations of the associated context for self-disquisition or a result of the non-contextual, denotated semantic demand of the reworded probe itself. Probe 5, for instance, certainly does carry an explicit semantic demand for self-evaluation simply by containing the word "assessment" in its request for self-description.

The percentage of self-evaluative remarks did increase in the predicted direction but not every predicted pairwise comparison reached significance. The "Tell us about yourself" and the "Tell us what is central to your view of yourself" probes were not expected to differ in the percentage of self-evaluative responses and this was born out. Because these two probes could be seen to be associated with essentially the same kind of prototypical situation for their most probable natural occurrence in everyday conversation, it was expected that people would answer in a similar manner as measured by the proportion self-evaluative responses.

table 4

MEAN INTER-JUDGE PROPORTIONS OF
SELF-EVALUATIONS PER PERSON

REQUESTS FOR SELF-DESCRIPTION	MEAN PROPORTION OF PAIR-WISE EVALUATIONS	SIG. ($p < .001$)
1. WHO ARE YOU?	.25	
2. TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF	.35	
3. TELL US ABOUT YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF	.78	
4. TELL US WHAT IS CENTRAL TO YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF	.78	
5. GIVE US YOUR HONEST ASSESSMENT OF HOW YOU VIEW YOURSELF	.81	
6. TELL US WHAT YOU ARE NOT	.71	

Note: numbers 1 - 5 are rank orderings of these statements with respect to the degree of intimacy or "depth" of self-disclosure these requests appear to be asking for. The requests are treated as a random variable and based on an arcsine transformation of the proportions ($n = 30$ per cell), the estimate of $w^2 = .51$.

As presented in table 4, the requests for self-description were rank ordered by three judges for their apparent intimacy or depth of disclosure. Since the "Tell us what you are not" request was not comparable to the other more positive requests for self-description, it was not ranked for its degree of requested intimacy of self-disclosure but simply placed at the bottom of the list. Hypothesis #2 was therefore partly supported by the increasing proportion of evaluative statements as the five requests for affirmative self-descriptions become more

intimate. Again, there is ambiguity as to whether the effect is due to the pragmatic effect of the associated paradigm situations or simply to the inherent semantic demand of the question itself.

Table 5 compares the mean total of responses elicited by each of the requests for self-description with rankings of the perceived familiarity or relative commonplaceness of those requests. Only a very low partial correlation of $r = -.14$ (keeping constant the number of evaluative responses) was obtained between the familiarity of the request and the total number of responses elicited.

The "Tell us what you are not" probe which was perceived as uncommon did, however, elicit an unexpected number of discrete responses per person. Upon inspection many of the responses were trivial and were generated in a routine manner. That is, once the initial difficulty in approaching the question was overcome, many students then simply generated formulaic responses. For instance, one 35 year-old male listed in point form twenty-one separate items starting with: "female, 34, Caucasian, black, Chinese, East Indian, over 150 pounds, under 130 pounds. . . ." Removing this request from consideration, a higher partial correlation can be obtained ($r = .88$).

table 5

MEAN RANKS OF COMMONPLACENESS OF REQUESTS & MEAN TOTAL RESPONSES

REQUEST	MEAN RANK	MEAN TOTAL
1. WHO ARE YOU	2.3	7.2
2. TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF	1.8	9.0
3. YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF	3.2	7.0
(4) WHAT IS CENTRAL TO YOUR	---	5.6
5. YOUR HONEST ASSESSMENT	3.5	9.3
6. WHAT YOU ARE NOT	4.2	10.1

1. Discussion

Use of the "Tell us about your view of yourself" probe practically reverses McGuire's claim that under 10% of elicited self-descriptive material is explicitly evaluative. McGuire may have based this finding on a sample of sixth-grade children (McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976), but this is something he does not mention in his 1984 position paper in which he simply states that "people" only provide 5%-10% explicit self-evaluations in response to his "nondirective probe." Adult participants have also been researched by McGuire and colleagues using the very same "Tell us about yourself" probe, so presumably McGuire does intend to refer to all people. If it turns out that his claim is indeed largely based upon a population of sixth-graders, that might help to account for the greater percentage of evaluative responses (35%) here obtained using McGuire's probe. University students are more competent than sixth-graders in articulating self-reflections and there is for them a greater range of self-evaluative concerns. Sexual attractiveness, self-discipline, or health consciousness are self-evaluations we would not expect too many six-graders to worry about.

In McGuire's version of the WAY questionnaire, namely his use of the "Tell us about yourself" request, the prepositional phrase "about yourself," serves as a direct object of the verb. In what could be considered an allied version of the question, "Tell us about your view of yourself," the direct object of the verb is the prepositional phrase "about your view" and what has become an adjectival phrase "of yourself" now serves to modify the noun "view." Now, given the *prima facie* definition of the self as "the person's view of himself" (English and English, 1958), then this wording could arguably be a more direct request for a person's "self-concept" than either of the traditional "who are you" or "tell us about yourself" questions. In any case, the results of this experiment clearly undermine McGuire's (1984) unconditional statement that the "spontaneous self" is so structured as to consist of less than 10% of evaluative self-descriptors.

VI. EXPERIMENT 2

Experiment 1 did not involve a direct manipulation of the hypothesized conversational situations. It is not certain whether the results were due to the associated conversational context or some other linguistic directive inherent to the semantic form of the questions themselves.

In order to help resolve this ambiguity, a direct instructional manipulation of the conversational context was attempted. If a non-contextual semantic demand of the question itself, its locutionary or semantic force, is indeed mainly responsible for the number of self-evaluative statements proffered, then the same question over different situations should produce approximately the same proportions of self-evaluations.

As in experiment 1, it is again hypothesized that the illocutionary force of the question helps participants to construe the context of self-description and does this by cueing an implicit reference to an associated conversational situation. This should help account for the differences in people's replies to the WAY or a variant of the WAY. To aid or impede the illocutionary force of the questions, participants were asked to respond to one of three variants of the WAY as if the particular request for self-description was actually occurring in an imagined situation.

A. METHOD

1. Materials and design

Three of the WAY type of requests for self-description used in experiment 1 were again employed: the traditional "Who are you?" itself, McGuire's more friendly variant, "Tell us about yourself," and the more reflective variant based upon McGuire's variant, namely the probe, "Tell us about your view of yourself."

The most practical manipulation of situations here undertaken was to ask the respondents simply to role-play being in the particular situation assigned as they proceeded to answer one of the three requests for self-description. Instructions this time read as follows:

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (Please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction.)

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: [here inserted was one of three situations]

Your task will be to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

One of three conversational situations was described in the place provided. On the other side of the page the same selected situation was reiterated. Below that heading there was written one of three probes.. The following are the conversational situations:

1. "You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends."
2. "You are being interviewed by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question . . ."
3. "You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question . . ."

These three situations were chosen because they could be seen as representative of three common conversational situations. The situation with the pollsters was chosen to represent a conversation with a complete stranger, a situation in which all three of the WAY probes have some plausibility.

As illustrated in table 5, all three probes were crossed with all three situations. The author and one other assistant independently coded the protocols. The judges' ratings were pooled to yield a single average rating of the number of self-evaluative statements.

Reliability of coding for each of the units in the protocols was measured by a $kappa = .93$ and $r = .93$, and for the proportion of evaluative/total responses per protocol an $r = .94$ was obtained.

table 6

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN: VERSION OF THE QUESTION

OVER SITUATIONS

IMAGINED SITUATION	"Who are you?"	"Tell us about yourself."	"Tell us about your view of yourself."	
answering a stranger (STRANGER)	(a) situation and question are congruent	(b)	(c)	(a + b + c)
a job interview (INTERVIEW)	(d)	(e) situation and question are congruent	(f)	(d + e + f)
a conversation with a very close friend (FRIEND)	(g)	(h)	(i) situation and question are congruent	(g + h + i)
	(a + d + g)	(b + e + h)	(c + f + i)	

As was carried out in experiment 1, the dependent variable of mean proportion of self-evaluative responses was obtained from a content analysis of the protocols. The experimental prediction was that the mean proportion of evaluative responses would increase with the normative appropriateness of the situation for the making of such evaluative responses. As in experiment 1, we should also see the effect of the questions themselves

eliciting an increase of self-evaluative responses with the inherent semantic demand of the question for such self-reflections. Of course, we still have the possibility that the semantic and the pragmatic effects of the questions are confounded. With the situation being now explicitly provided, the pragmatic effect resulting from participants' unguided attempt to imagine an appropriate conversational context that was hypothesized to occur among the questions in experiment 1 should now be partly or wholly supplanted. With the situation provided, there should not be the same need to construe for discourse relevance an implicated situation from the probe's normal occurrence in everyday conversation.

The three kinds of questions will no longer connote certain degrees of appropriate self-disclosure since the appropriate situation along with an appropriate degree of self-disclosure for each situation are now being supplied. This *a priori* ordering of three questions ranked with respect to their ability to elicit self-evaluations, should no longer result in a corresponding increase in the proportion of self-evaluative remarks, since we have provided the explicit context and thereby obviated the need to infer what might be implicated as the preferred context.

I have proposed that the question's connotations concerning the appropriate kind of self-disclosure are in part founded upon their normative use in certain kinds of situations. Hence, we can match these three questions to the kind of typical situation where they are most appropriately asked. The greatest differences in effect should therefore occur when the questions are crossed with their most appropriate situational context. That is, cell $a < e < i$, and of all the cell mean proportions, cell_i should have the greatest proportion of self-evaluative descriptions and cell_a the smallest.

2. Procedure and Participants

Given the above experimental hypotheses, and that at least 6 pairwise comparisons between groups would be required, it was estimated on the basis of the effect size given in experiment 1 that the sample size of each cell should be no less than 35.

Participants were given three minutes to write down some statements about themselves and then told to finish their last sentence and stop writing. Each of the nine cells of the design had a sample size of 34 - 40. Due to a printing error in which more questionnaires than desired were printed for one of the cells, one of the cells has a sample size of 60. Participants were told that this was a study as to how people think about themselves. Written instructions directed them to imagine answering the given request for information about themselves as if it occurred in a given situation. Each person was given only one of the situations described above.

Participants were directed to "role play" being in the situation described and respond with their first thoughts.

As in experiment 1, SFU students in undergraduate psychology classes were asked to volunteer. Of the 375 contextualized free-response questionnaires, 5 were not usable. Two people indicated that they would never find themselves in a situation where a close friend asks them to "tell us about yourself." Three others simply did not properly fill out the questionnaire. Median age of the participants was 21 ($SD = 7.4$, range 17 - 70) and 54% were females.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To help equalize the between-cell variances, an arcsine transformation was applied to the mean proportions of evaluative/total responses. Given the hypothesized group and cell orderings of the mean proportions of evaluative self-statements, support for the experimental hypotheses was provided by significant main effects for the situations, $F(2,361) = 21.43$, $p < .001$, and WAY variants, $F(2,361) = 77.36$, $p < .001$. On the basis of a Tukey Studentized

multiple comparison, two thirds of the between cell proportion of evaluative/total responses increased significantly in the predicted direction (see table 7).

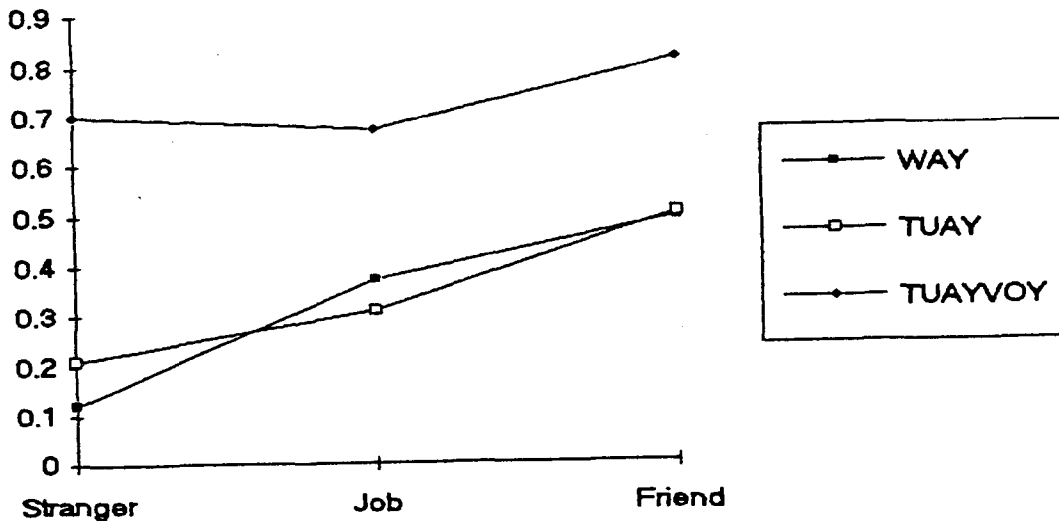
table 7
**MEAN PROPORTION OF EVALUATIVE/TOTAL RESPONSES
 WITHIN SITUATIONS AND WAY VARIANTS**

	WAY	TUAY	TUAYVOY	
STRANGER (POLLSTER)	a prop = .12 SD = .184 n = 39	b prop = .22 SD = .283 n = 38	c prop = .71 SD = .285 n = 38	.35 .360 115
	d prop = .37 SD = .334 n = 40	e prop = .32 SD = .281 n = 39	f prop = .70 SD = .25 n = 38	.46 .333 117
	g prop = .48 SD = .294 n = 65	h prop = .46 SD = .313 n = 34	i prop = .80 SD = .195 n = 39	.56 .309 138
prop =	.35	.33	.73	
SE =	.316	.305	.247	
n =	144	111	115	370

Not all of the between row and column cell relations achieved significance. In particular, the intermediary levels for situations and WAY variants did not always achieve a mid-point mean level significance.

Although the overall interaction between situations and WAY variants was significant, $F(4, 61) = 2.12, p < .01$, it was relatively small (mean square for the interaction was approximately 1/7 the size of the mean square for situations and it was 1/24 the size of the mean square for WAY variants). As shown in figure 1, the interaction is negligible, especially if we were to also take into account a plotting of the confidence intervals for each of the plotted means.

Figure 1: Mean Proportion of Evaluative Responses per Question over Situations



As suggested by figure 1, one component of this interaction appears to be the relative flatness of the TUAYVOY question over situations, while the WAY and the TUAY questions progressively elicit more evaluatives as the situation becomes more intimate. Caution here must be exercised in not over-interpreting this apparent interaction as proportional data often will incur a ceiling effect. The TUAYVOY already elicits a high proportion of evaluatives (.70) in the least intimate situation. There is quite possibly a conversational limit to how much one can talk about oneself by way of self-evaluative statements. One also makes oneself known to another by reporting on one's interests and attitudes towards things other than oneself. Not to do so would be an obvious hiatus in one's self-disquisition. Another component this interaction appears to be picking up pertains to how the WAY question in the situation of a job interview tends to elicit more self-evaluative responses than expected. There is of course the greater expectation that such situations would call for

"blowing of one's horn" by making positive self-evaluative statements concerning one's ability and suitability for the job. Although figure 1 does show a drop in the number of self-evaluatives for the job-WAY condition as compared to the job-TUAY condition, this difference did not achieve significance either by a Tukey Studentized comparison or even by the more liberal Newman-Keuls. Indeed, none of the within-situation comparisons between the WAY and TUAY achieved significance. All three pairwise within-situation comparisons between the TUAY and the TUAYVOY did, however, achieve significance ($p < .01$). This repeats the first experiment's finding of there being no significant difference between the WAY and the TUAY in eliciting self-evaluative statements, but a significant difference between the TUAY (or WAY) and the TUAYVOY.

Given this relatively small interaction, a case can be made for collapsing over situations (or WAY variants) for pairwise comparisons of the marginal distributions of the WAY variants (or situations). Results consistent with the hypothesis would be obtained by the following six contrasts achieving significance.

	F Value	p
1. $(a + b + c)/3 < (d + e + f)/3$	15.45	.0001
2. $(d + e + f)/3 < (g + h + i)/3$	9.07	.005
3. $(a + d + g)/3 < (b + e + h)/3$	0.52	.7477
4. $(b + e + h)/3 < (c + f + i)/3$	89.56	.0000
5. a < e	6.94	.0021
6. e < i	27.88	.0000

Only comparison #3 between the WAY variant and the TUAY variant collapsed over the three situations was not significant at the .05 level. Results consistent with the hypothesis were obtained, although the stronger prediction that each row and column pairwise difference would be significant was not supported. In particular, the intermediary level for situations, or for the written probes, did not achieve a mid-point significance at all levels of the other variable. Of the 12 relevant pairwise comparisons involving the

intermediate level of either variable, only 3 obtained significance via a Studentized *post hoc* analysis.

Overall, it was shown that how participants imagine the situation in which they are asked to talk about themselves will affect the rate at which they disclose self-evaluative judgements about themselves. This supports the role of the pragmatic effect upon how people construe the question and subsequently describe themselves. The slight variation in the kind of WAY type of question exerted an even stronger influence. While the semantic demand of the question no doubt plays a key role in making for this effect, part of this influence could also be seen as due to an association of the question with the kind of situation in which one would most likely find such a particularly worded request for self-disquisition. The present experiment cannot cleanly tease out these two factors, but at least to the extent that the situations themselves influence people's self-descriptions, independent of the semantic content of the probes, we have evidence of the pragmatic effect. Consistent with the hypothesis were the results of the main diagonal pair-wise comparison involving those WAY variants in their most congruent situation being significant in the predicted direction using either an *a priori* or *post hoc* comparison.

The standard "Who are you?" question can be interpreted, for instance, as interrogatively neutral, insulting or even ironic depending on the accent and tone with which the verb is spoken. Yet, few in the experimental situation would interpret this question as intending hostility or sarcasm. The experimental context in which the question is found serves to delimit some of the conceivable illocutionary possibilities while making ambiguous certain others. The question is not exactly interrogatively "neutral," nor is it very specific. The impersonal nature of the question and the situation in which it is asked, plus the terseness verging on curtness, carries its own demand to now flesh out a context of relevancy so that one can answer the question in the first place. And how are participants supposed to

do this when for the sake of experimental purity we make things strange and impersonal in order to minimize the effects of observers upon the observed?

Subtle differences in how something is asked can have marked effects in how people respond. The traditional "Who are you?" type of question makes no explicit reference to the questioner, while McGuire's "tell us about yourself" variant becomes more personable or friendly by the simple act of making explicit that it is "us" who would like to know something about the participants. By adding an explicit reference to self-reflection, the "tell us about your view of yourself" variant upon McGuire's probe would be expected to elicit more personalized statements, since the direct object has now shifted from "yourself" to "your view" of yourself. Such subtle changes in wording would be expected to elicit different kinds of replies, but we can begin to better understand in what direction and quality such changes will occur by considering not simply the semantics of what is said but also the pragmatics of people's perception of *how* it is said and for what situated purpose.

VII. EXPERIMENT 3

Experiment 2 pursued the role of a WAY variant as explicitly situated. Experiment 3 furthers this investigation by exploring the role of priming the kind of situation in which one is to talk about oneself. Illustrated in this experiment is how the context for answering different questions about others affects the context for answering a subsequent question about oneself.

A. MATERIALS AND DESIGN

Two separate groups of undergraduate students were asked to complete two open questions and were given 2 minutes for each question to write down their replies on a provided blank form. One group of 45 students was first asked to "Tell us about your friend." Subsequently, they were asked the McGuire's WAY variant, "Tell us about yourself". Forty-three students in a second group were asked to respond to McGuire's variant, but after first responding to the request: "Tell us about the last stranger you met". The dependent variable again consisted in the mean proportion of evaluative responses, either about another or about themselves.

Participants were this time obtained through the SFU subject pool for psychology consisting of students from lower level classes opting to participate for a few class credits.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 8 below presents the mean proportion of evaluative over total number of replies for the two response conditions.

table 8
MEAN PROPORTION OF EVALUATIVE REMARKS

	condition 1	condition 2	
FRIEND-SELF	describe a friend mean = .54 (sd = .330)	describe oneself mean = .50 (sd = .348)	n = 45 mean = .52
	describe a stranger mean = .30 (sd = .275)	describe oneself mean = .35 (sd = .286)	n = 43 mean = .33
mean =	.42	.42	

Analysis of variance indicated that the prior situation of describing a stranger vs a friend did make for a marked change in the number of self-evaluative remarks when participants were subsequently asked to describe themselves: $F(1, 86) = 10.77$, $MSe = .1459$, $p < .002$. The within factor of the two response conditions was not significant, $F(1, 86) = .01$, $MSe = .0484$, $p = .92$, nor was interaction of the response condition with the kind of prior situation, $F(1, 86) = 1.74$, $p = .19$.

How people first describe a prototypic other, friend or stranger, thus seems to define the context in which they would then describe themselves via McGuire's variant of the WAY type of research question. Of course, the pragmatic effects of embedding two open-ended questions on the same questionnaire are here confounded with what might be a non-pragmatic priming effect of the first question upon the second. Priming for a certain response set only raises the question as to why such an effect occurs. Is the effect merely an automatic carry-over of the rate of evaluative remarks or does something about the meaning of the conversational situation carry over to guide how one is subsequently to talk about oneself?

In any case, the diversity of such "indirect speech acts" (Searle, 1975/1991) demonstrates that what people do with sentences is not constrained by the surface forms of those sentences.

Other conventions must be drawn upon to direct interpretation and the relevancy of self-talk, like those involved in how we might typically answer a stranger. The total of such conversational conventions serves to delimit as relevant the near infinite possibilities of predicative content. Most important is that what one might say about oneself is circumscribed by what we know about, or infer of, the other whom we address.

VIII. EXPERIMENT 4

The effect of the questioner-questionee context was recently demonstrated with fixed questionnaires by Strack, Schwarz and Wanke (1991). One acclaimed advantage of fixed questionnaires over open-ended ones is that fixed questionnaires present respondents with much less uncertainty as to how to form answers, since the questions in a fixed questionnaire tend to be more specific and the choice of how to reply is greatly delimited by fixed-response formats. Given the reduced degree of ambiguity posed to the respondents in such a situation, one would surmise that there would not be the same need to resort to the conversational implicatures about what is being asked and how to reply. As discussed earlier Strack, Schwarz and Wanke provide a test of this conjecture. It is here proposed that we take what might be a commonly employed fixed questionnaire and provide the variation in what is normally assumed to be the source of those questions.

It is often desirable that total score variance of a multiple item questionnaire be increased through a high covariance between the items. It is also assumed that the individual questions pertaining to the same construct should be highly correlated. Such test construction aims may in turn produce some unanticipated effects such as the meanings of the questions becoming intertwined and producing reader interpretations different from what would be desired. While the questions may not be semantically ambiguous, their concrete realizations in people's perceived application to themselves is underdetermined. Following Strack, Schwarz and Wanke's (1991) methodological procedure as briefly described earlier, an attempt was made to see if the pragmatic effect would even be present under a more subtle or weaker manipulation of context. Here, the only comparison of contextual cues was the colour of the paper. If the pragmatic effect under these minimal conditions can be demonstrated as influencing self-ratings of one's self-esteem, then we should be ready to consider its influence upon more pronounced differences in context.

Rather than strictly replicate Strack, Schwarz and Wanke's (1991) method of placing similar questions on either the same or different questionnaires, in this experiment similar questions remained on different questionnaires and only the physical similarity/dissimilarity of the paper (i.e., its colour) was manipulated in two conditions.

B. METHOD

1. Materials and Procedure

The same 88 participants in experiment 3, and an additional 67 participants were also asked to complete two seemingly unrelated questionnaires. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, RSE (Rosenberg, 1979), was one of the questionnaires distributed and was headed as the "New York Psychological Self-esteem Scale". The second questionnaire was designed to be similar in appearance to the 10-item RSE (Likert format with only a four-point continuum). While similar in appearance, this questionnaire differed substantially in its title--"Employment Motivation Scale"--and in the types of items it contained (e.g., "I feel myself to be a natural leader", "I look forward to a stable and secure future", etc.). The two test questions shared a content similarity and were to be episodically related (one located as the last item on the RSE and the other as the first item on the "Employment Motivation Scale"). The Employment Motivation scale was stapled behind the RSE so that participants would fill out the RSE before proceeding to the second questionnaire..

The two items chosen for their content similarity were item 2 from the RSE ("At times I think I am no good at all") and item 5 ("I feel I do not have much to be proud of"). Item 2 now appeared at the bottom of the RSE and item 5 was removed from the RSE to appear as the first item on the Employment Motivation Scale. Of interest would be the correlation between item 2, now relocated at the bottom of the RSE, and item 5, now at the top of the following questionnaire.

Manipulation of the independent variable consisted simply of attempting to make visually explicit the apparent difference in purpose of the two fixed-choice questionnaires. This was done simply by using different coloured paper (white vs orange) or the same coloured paper (white vs white) for the two questionnaires. Following Strack, Schwarz and Wanke (1991), it was also hypothesized here that the correlation of these two RSE items between people would be lower when the questionnaires were presented on different coloured paper ($n = 79$) as compared to when the same questionnaires appeared on the same coloured paper ($n = 76$).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While the correlation between the two questions did drop ($r = .48$ versus $r = .34$) in the predicted direction due to the differing context of the two questionnaires being made more explicit via changing the colour of the forms, this single manipulation was not strong enough to effect a significant difference between these two correlations ($z_{\text{diff}} = 1.03, p = .15$).

A correlation coefficient for the two conditions provides a measure of the degree to which the answers were similar or different for these two questions depending on the content of their presentation. Here, the pragmatic effects of context would predict a lower correlation for the different context condition than for the same context condition. The notion of priming independent of this larger context of the questionnaires' ostensible purpose would predict, however, no difference between the two correlations. However, the present manipulation of only the colour of the forms was insufficient to produce a significant difference in correlations. The effect size of a $q = .169$ (Cohen, 1988) between the two correlations was small and the present experiment lacks sufficient power (approx. .25) to establish significance for this kind of difference between correlations that were small to begin with.

The intent of this experiment was to see if even a subtle, non-lexical cue would affect the reading of the background context in which similar questions were embedded. The hope

was that we could demonstrate a "contrast effect" (Schwarz, Münkler, & Hippler, 1990; Strack, 1992) of the preceding question upon an immediately subsequent question. While Strack, Schwarz and Wanke (1991) established that respondents do draw a pragmatic inference about the intended meaning of the episodic relationship of two similar questions, the present attempt at replication would indicate that a certain requisite degree of explicit context cueing is required before respondents are influenced in this manner by the differing context of the preceding but similar question.

IX. CONCLUSION

I have tried to argue for and experimentally illustrate that in our discourse to others about ourselves, self-disclosure or self-description does not occur without a consideration of the person to whom one would offer such information about oneself. As obvious as this should be, it is still surprising that even when an open-ended questionnaire is employed, one designed to minimally intrude upon how the participants "spontaneously" think of themselves independently of the researcher's organizational intentions, strategic action of an interpersonal sort still occurs. Participants are going to try as well as they can to concretize the situation and give a face to the person, present or not, whom they are addressing.

Even with respect to the mere quantity of self-evaluative remarks one gives on these open-ended questionnaires, certain prototypic conversational practices may serve as clues for defining the context of disclosure and self-judgment, especially when there is ambiguity as to whom one is addressing and what purpose the other has in asking for such a self-exposition. William James (1890/1959) suggested that a person "has as many social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares" (p. 294); and Walt Whitman playfully extols himself: "Do I contradict myself?/ Very well then I contradict myself,/ (I am large, I contain multitudes)" (1950/1855, section 51). This multiplicity of possible self-concepts, or at least self-presentations, is variable and even entertains contradictions with respect to whom we are addressing and what we perceive to be their immediate interests and purposes.

While it may be tempting to rush into a sweeping denial of the presence or discernment of a constant self, it is obvious that the mere diversity or changeability of people's self-presentations does not by itself preclude the existence of a core self or constellation of relatively stable self-ascriptions and perceptions. We experience within ourselves and in others at least a relative stability of many self-descriptors across situations and over time, one that serves with very few exceptions our everyday needs for identifying

other people. With respect to oneself one does not normally wake up wondering who one is or has been. Of course, this lived subjectivity of ourselves as being the same person, the same self over time, raises some difficult but important questions about the phenomenon of consciousness and the lived subjectivity of ourselves. In the case of our identification of others as being the same person, here we have a practical recourse to external indicators of identity and sameness and this has led some theorists to argue that personal stability is simply predicated on the stability of the external indicators themselves (Bem, 1972). We conveniently re-identify others by their bodies and behaviour and assume that they are essentially the same person physically, psychologically and even self-knowingly. Similarly, the same is said about our own self-attributions.

Consider the following thought experiment. What if we were required to re-identify a person simply by their words; and to help make things easier, let us say that what we have in hand are their self-descriptions as elicited by some variant of the WAY. The further question to consider would be how difficult it might be if we were also assigned the task of trying to identify this same person from a number of different writings over time and in different situations, mixed in with the self-descriptions of others also taken from different times and situations in their lives. Eliminate the easy identifiers like names and biographical history and I think one can now see how complicated and difficult the task becomes. There is the surprising confession by the Romantic poet William Wordsworth who, when reflecting upon the past selves of his youth found that:

. . . so wide appears
 The vacancy between me and those days
 Which yet have such-presence in my mind
 That musing on them, often do I seem
 Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
 And of some other Being.
 (from *The Prelude*, Bk 2, lines 28-33)

It is nonetheless conceivable that, as difficult as this might be, there could be certain stylistic or thematic features in a person's words that might serve to allow us to identify this unseen person even through their differing discourse about themselves over time and place.

What is personally experienced as more constant or of a different status of knowledge, is our subjective sense of ourselves as the same person across situations and time. There is a peculiarly "self-evidential" quality to this kind of knowledge, one that does not involve mere self-ascription. As Jones (1967) pointed out, "If, therefore, 'I have a toothache' were a self-ascription, it would not make sense to retort: But how do you know?" (p. 16). Equally nonsensical would be the question "Are you sure it is *you*?" Jones' argument is that such self-expressions about ourselves are more than mere gestures; they constitute real communications of direct self-disclosures (not self-ascriptions solely made from observations of one's behaviours) of a person who is an experiencing being in the first place. It has been argued (Anscombe, 1975; Chrisholm, 1981) that to know that we are having certain experiences like being the same self more or less consistently through time and place is not something we normally need to determine by externally consulting with what is happening in the world. The subjective world of ourselves as the same person and the unity of presentational selves are experiences that are simply "lived" or "presupposed" by the very nature of being a conscious Self in the first place, rather than phenomena that are observed along with the rest of the furniture in the empirical world. H. D. Lewis (1969) argued that much confusion about self-identity has resulted from attempts to define this "primary identity," or self-consciousness of ourselves as the unique and unified self one finds oneself to be, in terms of the "secondary" or "subsidiary identities" of ourselves such as one's social roles and psychological self-ascriptions.

This notion of a primary, lived self-identity has not been without its critics (Boer & Lycan, 1980; Taschek, 1985) and there is little content to this sense of ourselves other than that we a living consciousness, a unique self no matter the particulars of one's past history

and situation. As Lewis would argue, "In a more basic sense I have no doubt who I am--I am myself, the being I expressly recognize myself to be in a way which is not possible for knowledge of any other" (ibid, p. 37). Even if we hold that there is this fundamentally "felt" or constructed unity of ourselves that does not wait upon what we may observe of ourselves in the world, or perceive others as observing about us, there may be real limits as to how far even this lived subjectivity of ourselves remains the same over time. As Wordsworth's testimony would illustrate, we need not resort to the phenomena of multiple personalities and de-personalization for us to question any notion that it is the nature of consciousness itself to be unfailingly self-identifying. Consciousness may be self-identifying and unified to a very large extent, but not always perfectly or completely.

Whatever the phenomenological reality of this fundamental identity of ourselves might be, psychological research upon the conceptual self really seeks to describe and seek constancies in our so-called "secondary identities". Indeed, if we assume that the possibilities for an indefinite range of change in self-definition exists--a range which in principle is not readily determinable in advance, especially given enough time for development or a diversity of situations--then we must entertain a certain modesty in our claims concerning what is measurable about a person's core self. What we capture at any one time is only a still-shot of the person here and now in a particular situation of self-disclosure. Some generalization across situations and over time is no doubt possible and we might also expect that certain dimensions of the person's self-definition or secondary identities are going to be more fluid or variable than others. What may matter or loom large to individuals today about themselves such that they are inclined to give a self-report about it, may shrink or simply become voided over time. Many of the student participants reported themselves being a student in a particular field. Once they graduate the self-ascription of being a student of course becomes voided. Furthermore, there are potential situations that may indeed make earlier self-

attributions irrelevant. Self-talk about being kind, compassionate or forgiving is less likely to occur in such severe and calamitous situations as human warfare.

Some generalities are possible. Bodily characteristics or temperamental dispositions, for example, appear to change less quickly over time than do things like interests, although people can and do sustain lifelong interests in an endless variety of different things. The search for core self-attributes and the ideal measurement of these has been in part a search for reference points in an ever-changing world. This may yet be another burden we place upon the self and upon our methodology. The sense of ourselves cannot sustain this burden, since it would appear that it is by its very nature multifaceted, adaptable to various seemingly conflicting situations, and potentially changeable over time.

It was hoped that the open-ended WAY type of questionnaire would best allow people to structure, according to their own needs, inclinations and current situation, their own self-perceptions and manner of viewing themselves. Of course, subsequent content analysis of people's self-attributions unavoidably involves some imposition of meaning by the self theorist. But the probes turn out to be even less open-ended than even this constraint would establish. The problem of how social factors within the testing situation affect people's self-presentations, which is the problem of "situationality" as Tucker (1966) called it, would call into question not only the self theorist's successful realization of prediction beyond the testing situation but how they have traditionally theorized about the self. The idea that a person's self-conceptualizations and self-perception will influence their behaviour in a variety of situations implies some idea of a "core" self, or at least a relatively stable set of self-attitudes and beliefs.

The data here presented show that even with respect to what has been thought to be a relatively constant structural quality of people's "spontaneous self," namely the proportion of expressly self-evaluative ascriptions, people's self-descriptions are really quite variable to subtle rewordings of the probes for self-disquisition and contextual information about their

intended meaning. Tucker (ibid) recommended that self theorists become more openly "self-conscious" about their own work and what can be inferred from it. This dissertation has attempted to explicate further one of the dimensions of the self-disquisitional context that we should become more self-conscious about: the conversational demands that all discourse carries. People are going to interpret what is being said or asked of them by attempting to infer what intent might lie behind such requests and they do so in part by drawing upon certain fundamental assumptions of co-operative conversation, assumptions that have begun to be disclosed by Grice and his followers.

It is interesting to note in passing that while the purported advantage of open-ended probes like the WAY or TST was to allow respondents to determine their own categories of self-description, it was actually found that people reported the TST as being the measure which allowed for the least accurate self-description when compared to such fixed response instruments as Gough's Adjective Checklist, Bill's Index of Adjustment and Values, or Fiedler's Semantic Differential Technique (Spitzer, Stratton, Fitzgerald, Mach, 1966). What this may suggest is that people really don't know themselves to the degree that the TST or other WAY variants would assume. It simply isn't that easy to complete these kinds of questionnaires, yet if the self were the kind of discernable, self-transparent object that many self theorists need to presume is the case, then this kind of difficulty should not occur to the extent that it does. It is revealing that people apparently feel that the more structured probes provide a better means of self-disclosure. Of course, this finding may be in part or wholly a reflection of the perceived status and technological sophistication of the test itself. The TST must appear to the testees as a somewhat simplistic instrument, even though the subsequent content analysis of the results might indeed be very rigorous or complex. People don't see this part of the test's scoring and interpretation but observe only a direct request for them to write out 20 one-line statements about who they are. The usual expectation is that psychologists with their testing instruments can tell us something true and insightful about

ourselves that we might not have known on our own, in which case the TST must be seen as somewhat artless. But let us assume that this finding about people's negative judgement towards the TST involves more than a demand characteristic of the test itself. If this turns out to be a true expression of the perceived "accuracy" of the test itself to disclose something central about ourselves, then the notion of a crystallized self readily discernable to the person him- or herself has to be abandoned.

The experiments here presented do serve to disconfirm the existence of a crystallized and readily knowable self, but they do not go as far as to completely dispute the existence or possible measurement of some relative constancies about ourselves. The demonstrated variability of self-presentations between situations and similar WAY types of probes does add a further difficulty in the measurement and inference of what those relative constancies might be. While Rosenberg (1979) argued that the presenting self "is by no means chameleon-like" (p. 46), what has been illustrated here is that the presentational self is one that attempts to co-operate with what is perceived to be relevant and apposite to the particular occasion and context for self-presentation. Even when presented with the same request to disclose something about themselves, people will in fact talk about themselves quite differently to some people whom they believe know and are interested in certain things which they take to be unknown or not of interest to others. At the risk of putting too little into the conceptual self that we seek to measure, at least this cooperation can be said to be one relatively stable constancy behind the variability of our self-presentations.

Rules of intelligible communication can be seen as helping to delimit what is deemed relevant and those rules vary with respect to prototypic conversational contexts, such as the talk which strangers exchange as opposed to friends. Rom Harré (1987) recently suggested that there is a need to supplement experimental psychology with linguistic analysis. Certainly, there is a good case for improving attention to the rules for, and use of, the vocabulary which is likely to be judged relevant to communication and understanding of the

phenomenon under study. Attention should also be given to some of the pragmatics of discourse where participants are believed to infer relevancy by means of reliance upon required principles of efficient communication.

There is naturally an ongoing debate as to whether or not such principles carry this kind of authoritative force. When viewed as the necessary--or simply as the most useful--presuppositions to adopt in order to realize the desire for efficient communication, we have in hand an explanatory account as to why the regularities we observe in discourse occur as they do. Those who find such claims difficult to prove or support may opt to simply provide descriptive generalizations, but then, as Taylor & Cameron (1987) point out, "we have not solved the riddle of the observable orderliness of conversational interaction" (p. 96).

A more personal question is raised by these kinds of considerations of our social embeddedness. It pertains to whether there is a core and organized description of oneself that is at least relatively independent of the social situation in which one finds oneself. People will attest to certain descriptions as applying, not applying, or sometimes applying to themselves, but the diversity of such descriptions, their varying degrees of affirmation and their endless nuance by other descriptors and modifiers, renders unlikely the prospect for a core "self" explicable in an univocal and constant manner. The evidence here presented lends further support to the view that the search for a constant and univocal conceptual self cannot be made independent of the kinds of real-world frames of social context within which people *find* themselves.

In personality theory and measurement, a long debate occurred regarding whether or not the notion of "trait" could stand as a fundamental unit and one that is determinable from behaviour. The search here for relatively enduring characteristics or predispositions that would possess both temporal and cross-situational consistency became mired in fundamental questions pertaining to the number and kinds of traits and to the requisite degree of cross-situational constancy for those traits to serve as predictive of behaviour. Walter Mischel

(1968) and others coming from a behavioural perspective argued that personality attributions were more or less artifactual to raters generalizing only from one situation and thereby ignoring cross-situational influences. Although maintaining that situational consistency is low, Mischel and Peak (1982) later acknowledged that at least the temporal consistency of traits would be high. While people may change over time, they do so slowly. One solution to the problem posed by Mischel was simply to make more general the units of analysis. Instead of specific traits and behaviour-level consistency across situations, we should be looking for prototypic features in personality.

While theorists of the conceptual self, as opposed to trait theorists theorizing about personality, would start with people's own self-perceptions, we have the same problem of educating some core descriptors that possess some requisite degree of situational constancy. Educating generalized characteristics sacrifices the specificity of self-ascriptions that was originally sought to individualize one's self. Also, in the example here at hand, we have found that, contrary to prior assumptions, the proportion of self-evaluatives is not relatively constant across people, and is not applicable to a variety of situations. Some years ago, Endler (1973) proposed that the issue of cross-situational consistency versus situational specificity was a "pseudo-issue". The argument being that the debate over which factor was more important detracts from getting on with the task of simply researching how both personality and situational factors interact to influence behaviour. It is not clear how Mischel's attempt to seek greater prototypical generality solves the problem as opposed to simply delaying it. The interactional approach is still going to require some delineation of "core" situations in order to investigate how they may indeed interact with what we might deem important or interesting characteristics of people or their self-ascriptions.

The importance of context is now well recognized and Max Black (in Dascal, 1981) was probably right in stressing it when he proposed the creation of a special discipline called "contextics." The seemingly intractable problem has been with the complexities of context

and the variety of ways it may influence people's actions, or be perceived by the actors themselves as relevantly bearing upon what they do. While easy generalizations and quick advance into this complexity have not occurred, we must still make the attempt since we often invoke the role of situations or context in our psychological studies of the person. As earlier defined, "pragmatics" is in general the study of the speech acts and the contribution of context on those acts. It is therefore not surprising that pragmatics would provide some interesting leads and elaborations. As of yet, however, even pragmatics has not provided a precise systematization of what it is we mean by context. Perhaps the formalization of pragmatics is premature and its basic ideas are too often vague and not easily explicative. The notion of "intent" is one of those terms difficult to explicate but somehow it serves as a term we seem readily to understand. In any case, the experiments here undertaken have attempted to utilize a notion of conversational context. The situations of discourse between friends or with a stranger may well serve as prototypic situations of address and self-presentation. Of course, even here we have some notions about different kinds of strangers. The situation of the job interview involves strangers, but here it was found that the imagined job interview tended to elicit more self-evaluatives than talk with even "safe" strangers (i.e., pollsters) on the street. This effect was less pronounced with the "tell us about your view of yourself" probe which tended to elicit about 70% evaluatives across all the situations. If we discount for the moment the possible ceiling effect that might be obscuring situational differences for this probe, then it might well be the case that probes calling for a greater self-reflection would override the situation and reveal a cross-situational constancy in at least this structural aspect of people's self-presentations. This, however, is only speculative at this juncture.

For close to half a century, psychologists have employed WAY types of probes in the hope of finding in people's self-conceptualizations some core notions or structural relations that would be relatively enduring across situations. These would serve both to individuate

people descriptively and predict something about how they would act in any given situation. An implication of this study is that more needs to be done in the way of a theoretical analysis of context and query. The search for a conceptual self that endures across prototypic conversational contexts should not confuse such a self with the prior, but contentless, primary identity (Lewis, 1969). Nor should we confuse the self-knowing conceptual self with personality, disposition, or character which may or may not be available to the individual's awareness. The latter, structural aspects of oneself, even if known, may not count as the kinds of self-knowledge that is proffered in our discourse about ourselves to others.

Future analysis and research might explore some other dimensions of people's self-descriptions over variations of context. Besides the proportion of self-evaluative remarks as has here been studied, particular reference to the kinds of psychological self-ascriptions could be considered. Again, one would expect that the frequency of voicing certain self-attributes would vary in accordance with the contextual appropriateness for such particulars. If not the free expression, at least the strength or amount of certain individuating psychological attributes, would be expected to remain more constant than others. How people evaluate their own degree of empathy towards suffering animals, for example, should be more stable across situations than their evaluation of their own degree of self-confidence.

Variations in the kind of probe itself could also be further explored. We have already seen how the here proposed "Tell us about your view of yourself" produces a more constant proportion of evaluative responses across situation than does the traditional "Who are you?" or the "Tell us about yourself" probes. To get around the possible ceiling effect incurred by using the the proportion of evaluative self-ascriptions, other dependent variable measures could instead be employed. Part of the recognized advantage of the WAY types of probes was its putative directness, yet there remains a certain indirectness in these kinds of probes. The "Tell us about your view of yourself" is arguably a more direct probe relevant to what it is we hope to measure about a person's self-concept. What has not being asked for directly are self-

characterizations that would remain stable across all conceivable situations as asked by any kind of interlocutor. Perhaps such an "open-ended" probe for cross-situational self-characterizations is not to be found, but no one has yet tried something as simple as, "What best describes who you are to all people?" About & Skerry's (1983) probe, "What is the most important thing about you, so important that without it you could no longer be yourself," is one that we also would expect to be less variable over the manipulated variations of context. Another followup along these suggested lines of future research would be to incorporate within subject comparisons across the manipulated situations².

If we must change our notions about the availability and situational constancy of self-knowledge, as the variability of self-presentations and dissatisfaction of people with the completeness of those self-presentations might suggest, then what do we put in its place? I have attempted to point towards the adoption of a more flexible use of our metaphors and models of the self. If the self is situationally variable, or at least so variable within itself as to readily draw upon different descriptors for different occasions, then one possibility for future theorizing is to adopt those metaphors best suited for the kinds of particular questions and situated purposes we may have in our investigations about the self. There is a strong interpretative quality about our self-knowledge suggesting that the self is something we must interpret for ourselves rather than simply describe as if it were a kind of object. Does self-knowledge of even just our own self-perceptions, putting aside the thorny questions of self-deception and false consciousness (Ricoeur, 1974), thus express and require a kind of interplay between different and even conflicting pictures of ourselves? Goethe (1829/1984) once said, "I do not know myself and God forbid that I should" (April 10, 1829).

What we can capture about ourselves and present to others consists of thematic summaries, explanatory interpretations, and evaluations of our lived actions, personal history and interpersonal objectifications of ourselves with others. In the process we self-

² This suggestion was made by Dr. Anthony Greenwald in a personal communication.

define ourselves, as well as acquire ascriptions of ourselves via our living. Dimensions like one's past history would presumably be more enduring than social comparisons and psychological ascriptions, as standards of psychobiography demand stability in one's accounts, at least with respect to key events. Yet, as William Runyan (1982) points out, "due to changes in theoretical perspective, available evidence, author's purposes, and the characteristics of audiences, a continuing diversity in biographical accounts seems inevitable." Of course, those accounts are to be preferred which are also based on greater bodies of evidence and organizational integration, and can best accommodate the various perspectives that relevantly bear on the subject at hand.

Probably no one metaphor will suffice and it would be useful, I think, to have metaphors drawing attention to the self-interpretative nature of our self-knowledge. The textual metaphor about the process of our self-understanding is useful in this respect. Rosenberg (1979) himself suggested that with respect to our "presenting self, we "are both script authors and central actors" (p. 45). There is a kind of text of ourselves that we attempt to read from our actions and life in the world and particularly from our interactions with others. Any textual reading and interpretation must take place by means of, and within, the presuppositions and constraints provided by the community or tradition in which the reading takes place (Ricoeur 1974). Part of that tradition or context for our reported readings of ourselves to others involves the conversational rules and forms thought appropriate and warrantable. Rosenberg makes the further point that we "generally want other people to think of us as a certain type of person, and make efforts to ensure that they do" (ibid, p. 46). We also want the same of ourselves and we no doubt make efforts to achieve a self-consistency and coherency in the quasi-text of ourselves that we would like to write or enjoy reading. Again, community standards inform how we might shape and evaluate this living text.

Perhaps it is not too surprising that psychology has yet to give due observance to the subtleties of discourse interpretation. If language serves to direct our attention to the world, then one reason for this obtuseness to human discourse may be our over-use of the term "subjects," when making reference to volunteers in our studies. While a few psychologists have objected to the etymologically suggested power relationship of a sovereign experimenter over dependent subjects (Brandt, 1982), the term as effectively used really does not carry such connotations. Current usage does, however, suggest a certain passivity on the part of volunteers made subject to, brought under, or caused to undergo, certain treatments. The implied passivity is simply not there; rather what we see is an active cooperation in accord with the conventions of intelligible (Grice, 1967/89), relevant (Sperber and Wilson, 1986a) and polite (Leech, 1983) discourse serving as "strategic action in context" (Haslett, 1987).

Past metaphors of the self have, as I have argued, tended to abet and consolidate what has become a kind of abstract, decontextualized notion of the self, particularly as the metaphors invoke spatialized representations of one sort or another. The very inadequacy of self-descriptions that people experience when attempting to capture or convey to another one's complete or even essential self, might suggest that we have here the beginning of metaphor in the form of metonymy and synecdoche. In discussion with some of the participants their self-descriptions, there emerged a general dissatisfaction with the adequacy of those self-descriptions to stand for what one was all about. People resort to listing particulars about themselves which by themselves simply don't serve to sum up what is essential about oneself. A mere part of oneself must stand for or point to the whole (i.e., synecdoche) or only a few select attributes might somehow capture something about oneself as a "Self" (i.e., metonymy). If this be the beginning of metaphor, then the bulk of our self-descriptions become metaphors, but metaphors for what? Perhaps we can't easily answer that question, but we can consider the process itself whereby theorists attempt to objectify that which is in the end a subject. An interesting feature about understanding by way of

metaphors is that metaphor makes reference by a kind of detour through fiction. What is not the thing itself is nevertheless posited as being in some way a concrete representation of, or pointer to, those things which, for whatever reason, eluded being fully or readily grasped by a more prosaic discourse.

The open-ended kinds of probes for self-description that have here been investigated assume that the possibility of self-knowledge, or relatively stable self-conceptions exists, and that people can convey this knowledge into words. People somehow know who they are and can determine for themselves on an open-ended questionnaire how to make this known in a manner "most expressive of [their] own needs and most meaningfully related to [their] current situation" (Bugental & Zelen, 1950, p. 484). Many self theorists, like Kuhn, hold that these self-descriptions originate from the perceptions of how others relate to and view us in a variety of situations. As Tucker (1966) has pointed out, this would entail that such self theorists must oppose themselves to those personality or self theorists who would employ trait notions. The notion of stable, dispositional traits arising from within, rather being the internalizations of how we perceive others as viewing us, does conflict with this notion that the source of our self-attributions comes from without. What may be underplayed by both the symbolic interactionists and trait theorists is the idea that in some fundamental ways people are also self-defining rather than other-defined. The meta-metaphor about this process of self-description that I want to propose is that of textual understanding.

While not a perfect metaphor, the notion that there is a kind of quasi-text of ourselves in the process of being written captures something about the interpretative nature of self-understanding. Just as the text addresses particular readers, our self-presentations have here been shown to be responsive to the conversational context in which they are proffered. Just as the text "fixes" the meaning of speech into the written work, our self-presentations and behavioural expressions are analogously "fixed" to some extent in our memories of ourselves and in what might be the nonconscious schemas or themes of

ourselves incorporated as salient or core characterizations. As an unfinished text in the making, we also undergo continual amending and development of our self-ascriptions and self-knowledge, in a manner responsive to characterological development, temporal change and situated re-evaluation. Another point of metaphoric comparison might suggest that, just as literal texts may assume a communal meaning beyond even the author's intent, so too do our lives for others. Our public self-ascriptions become "fixed" in a kind of social memory. Other people's memories, expectations and societal records of certain events in our lives thereby provide some of our "substantiation" and stability. It is therefore not surprising that people's elicited self-disquisitions often make reference to their social roles and perceived social evaluations.

As suggestive as this textual metaphor may be, it should again be emphasized that no single metaphor seems to do an adequate job of capturing our various understandings of what it is to be a self and our various theories about the self.

The long-standing mirror metaphor of the self discovering its image in reflections of itself with others is still quite apposite. But the mirror metaphor, too, suggests a certain passivity and does not adequately draw attention to the active construction of meaningful self-discourse. The intentional and strategic nature of this discourse is perhaps better comprehended by Greenwald's "totalitarian ego" image. Here the egocentricity of one's interpretative schemas and cognitive biases towards oneself is aptly captured. There is also, however, something "un-totalitarian" in our seeking to accommodate ourselves to the interests of the situation and persons to whom we address our self-disquisitions. This "co-operative" nature of self-exposition, and the fact that it arguably accords with the maxims of relevant and polite conversation, suggests a different metaphor: that of the self as a project of communal interpretation, a kind of public and private text always in the process of being written and edited--a text wherein the public and private address and mutually inform each other.

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XI Appendix A: Questionnaires

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire A1]

This is a study on social perception. It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the task. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Of course we would like you to complete the task, but if at any stage of this study you wish to discontinue your participation, please feel free to do so.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

On the back of this page you will find some questions.

Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the signal to begin.

Who are you?

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire A2]

This is a study on social perception. It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the task. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Of course we would like you to complete the task, but if at any stage of this study you wish to discontinue your participation, please feel free to do so.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

On the back of this page you will find some questions.

Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the signal to begin.

Tell us about yourself

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire A3]

This is a study on social perception. It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the task. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Of course we would like you to complete the task, but if at any stage of this study you wish to discontinue your participation, please feel free to do so.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

On the back of this page you will find some questions.

Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the signal to begin.

Tell us about your view of yourself

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire A4]

This is a study on social perception. It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the task. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Of course we would like you to complete the task, but if at any stage of this study you wish to discontinue your participation, please feel free to do so.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

On the back of this page you will find some questions.

Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the signal to begin.

Tell us what is central to your view of yourself

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire A5]

This is a study on social perception. It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the task. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Of course we would like you to complete the task, but if at any stage of this study you wish to discontinue your participation, please feel free to do so.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

On the back of this page you will find some questions.

Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the signal to begin.

Give us your honest assessment of how you view yourself

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire A6]

This is a study on social perception. It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the task. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Of course we would like you to complete the task, but if at any stage of this study you wish to discontinue your participation, please feel free to do so.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

On the back of this page you will find some questions.

Please do not turn the page now. Wait for the signal to begin.

Tell us what you are not

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire B]

Below, in the left-hand column there are 5 requests somebody could direct to you. In the right-hand column there are 5 situations you could find yourself in.

As you know, the kinds of questions that can be asked of you depend upon your relationship with the questioner and the kind of situation in which the question is being asked. For example, it would be considered odd or inappropriate for your dentist to ask you to answer some math questions.

Your task will be simply to MATCH each question listed on the left with the LETTER of the most appropriate situation.

A request for information directed to you

1. "Tell us (me) about yourself." _____
2. "Give us (me) your honest assessment of how you view yourself." _____
3. "Who are you?" _____
4. "Tell us (me) about your view of yourself." _____
5. "Tell us (me) what you are not." _____

A situation in which you find yourself.

- A. You are a stranger knocking on a strange door
- B. You have decided to undergo psychotherapy to work through some personal problems. This is your first session.
- C. You are having an intimate conversation with a friend late one evening.
- D. You are being interviewed for a job.
- E. You are in a philosophy discussion group.

Thank you for your help

[Experiment 1, Questionnaire C]

Below are 5 requests (from A to E) which somebody might ask of you, depending on the situation.

Your task is to **RANK** the requests in terms of how **FAMILIAR** or **COMMON** you **think** they are.

WHAT YOU MIGHT BE ASKED:

- A. "Tell us about yourself."
- B. "Tell us about your view of yourself."
- C. "Give us your honest assessment of how you view yourself."
- D. "Tell us what you are not."
- E. "Who are you?"

Now **RANK** each request placing the letter of the request (from A to E) in the appropriate box below.

NOTE: DO NOT USE THE SAME LETTER (A - E) TWICE. IN OTHER WORDS, PLACE A DIFFERENT LETTER (FROM A TO E) IN EACH BOX BELOW.

most
uncommon

uncommon

common

most common

Thank you for your help

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A1]

***** INSTRUCTIONS *****

AGE: _____.

SEX: _____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question.

"Who are you?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A2]

*** **INSTRUCTIONS** ***

AGE:_____.

SEX:_____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question.

"Tell us about yourself?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A3]

*** **INSTRUCTIONS** ***

AGE:_____.

SEX:_____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are walking down the street. Two pollsters stop you. They are doing a survey and you decide to answer their questions. One asks you the question.

"Tell us about your view of yourself?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A4]

*** **INSTRUCTIONS** ***

AGE:_____.

SEX:_____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are being interviewed by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are being interviewed by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question.

"Who are you"?

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A5]

***** INSTRUCTIONS *****

AGE: _____.

SEX: _____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are being interviewed by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are being interviewed by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question.

"Tell us about yourself?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A6]

*** **INSTRUCTIONS** ***

AGE: _____.

SEX: _____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are being interview by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are being interviewed by two interviewers for a job and one of the interviewers asks you the question.

"Tell us about your view of yourself?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A7]

*** **INSTRUCTIONS** ***

AGE: _____.

SEX: _____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends.

"Who are you?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A8]

*** **INSTRUCTIONS** ***

AGE:_____.

SEX:_____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following

SITUATION: You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends.

"Tell us about yourself?"

[Experiment 2, Questionnaire A9]

***** INSTRUCTIONS *****

AGE:_____.

SEX:_____.

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. It will only take 5 minutes to complete the task. On the back of this page you will find a single question. (please do not turn the page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You are to imagine answering this question as if it occurred in the following situation:

SITUATION: You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends.

Your task is to "role play" being in the situation described above and respond to the question with your first thoughts since we are interested in your first thoughts about yourself. You may write out your various answers to the question in point form in the space provided on the other side of this page.

Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

SITUATION: You are having a conversation with two very close and trustworthy friends.

"Tell us about your view of yourself"

[Experiment 3, Instructions]

***** INSTRUCTIONS *****

Hello,

This is a study of how people think about themselves. There are two questions you will be asked to answer. Each question will only take 2 minutes to complete. On the next page you will find a single question. (please do not turn to the next page just yet. Wait for the instruction).

You may answer the question in point form. Do not worry about contradictions or inconsistencies in your responses. Now, wait for the instruction to turn over the page to find out what will be the first question you will be answering.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.

[Experiment 3, Questionnaire A1]

QUESTION #1

AGE:

MALE/FEMALE

Question: "Tell us about your best friend?"

[Experiment 3, Questionnaire A2]

QUESTION #2

AGE:

MALE/FEMALE

Question: "Tell us about yourself?"

[experiment 3, Question B1]
QUESTION #1

AGE:

MALE/FEMALE

Question: "Tell us about the last stranger you met?"

[Experiment 3, Questionnaire B2]

QUESTION #2

AGE:

MALE/FEMALE

Question: "Tell us about yourself?"

***** INSTRUCTIONS *****

Hello,

This is part of a study of how people think about themselves. On the next page there is one short questionnaire that you will be asked to complete. This will only about a minutes to complete.

Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire as we wish to preserve your anonymity.

MALE/FEMALE (Please circle)

AGE _____.

Permit me to thank you in advance for your help.