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Social identity, disidentification, and the at-risk student: An intergroup relations perspective.

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ABSTRACT

The present study surveyed 644 (337 males, 306 females) high school students and found that social groups that were disidentified from schools, when compared to identified groups, (a) were perceived to be more distinctive, (b) were more sensitive to the number of competing outgroups, (c) had more closed and cohesive group structures, (d) were perceived to have more homogeneous memberships, and (e) were perceived to be more likely to enact behavioral sanctions against members who strayed from internal group norms. While members of school-identified groups had better self-esteem on average than members of disidentified (at-risk) groups, members of disidentified groups who felt closely connected to their groups had better self-esteem than those who felt more loosely associated, *and*, such disidentified group members had self-esteem comparable to even identified group members. The results of the present study suggest that the dominant individualistic paradigm fails to satisfactorily explain, or address the needs of socially connected at-risk students who rely on their anti-normative groups to buoy their self-esteem and define their identities.

RÉSUMÉ

L'étude en question était composé d'un groupe de 644 élèves de niveau secondaire. Le bilan de l'étude était que les groupes sociaux non-associés aux écoles, par comparaison avec les groupes associés aux écoles, (a) étaient perçus comme plus distinctifs, (b) étaient plus sensible aux groupes rivaux, (c) avaient des structures de groupe plus intîmes et fermées, (d) étaient perçus comme des groupes avec des membres plus homogènes, et (e) étaient perçus comme des groupes enclin à imposer des sanctions behavioristes contre les membres qui ne se conformaient pas aux standards internes. En moyenne, alors que les membres de groupes associes aux écoles avaient un meilleur respect de soi que les étudiants dans les groupes non-associés (les étudiants en danger), les membres de groupes non-associés qui se sentaient liés à leurs groupes avaient un meilleur respect de soi que ceux qui étaient moins intimement liés. En surcroît, les membres de groupes non-associés susmentionnés avaient un respect de soi semblable à celui des membres de groupes associés. Les résultats de cette étude semblent indiquer que le paradigme individualiste dominant n'explique pas suffisament les besoins des étudiants en danger qui se fient à leurs groupes anti-normatifs pours s'affirmer et pour sculpter leurs identités.

INTRODUCTION

Parents, teachers, and school administrators are often frustrated by the persistance of at-risk students' at-risk behaviors. Such students often persist in behaviors that are considered inappropriate and undesirable by schools, despite negative reinforcement, punishment, inconvenience, positive reinforcement of alternative behaviors, and unpleasant social sanctions. Whether the at-risk behaviors in question include truancy, a lack of academic commitment, acting out, or illegal activities, students at-risk of failing or dropping out challenge common understandings about what should motivate and deter social behaviors. Their behaviors appear, at least on the surface, to be irrational. The received wisdom about learning suggests that punishment should decrease or lead to the elimination of the behaviors for which individuals are punished. Indeed, for most people, that is how punishment and negative reinforcement works. Further, school authorities tend to assume that the rewards of pro-establishment behavior and values should, in and of themselves, be powerful influencing factors in the lives of at-risk students, as they are for those students who *excel* at school.

At-risk students represent a sizable minority that seem to be both "anti-social" in as far as they resist adherence to established mainstream norms and behaviors, and "irrational" in as far as punishment and negative reinforcement has little effect on their socially anti-normative behaviors. Two possible conclusions can be reached; either the fundamental principles of learning and reinforcement do not apply to these individuals, or the principles work all too well, albeit in non-obvious ways. The goal of the present study is to explore

the possibility that at-risk students are in fact *highly* rationale, and are simply receiving other reinforcements of their anti-normative behavior.

The present study sought to clarify the nature of the systems of reinforcement at-risk students function within by examining early and mid - high school populations. In setting the stage for specific hypotheses this introduction will address three key issues. First, the perceived limitations of the prevailing individualistic approach to at-risk student interventions will be discussed. Second, I will seek to identify the consequent need for an intergroup relations perspective on at-risk students' behaviors. Finally, the possible contributions of social identity theory, the concept of social disidentification, and self-categorization theory to developing new understandings of the social/motivational environment of at-risk students will be considered.

Understanding "At-Risk" Students: The Limitations of an Individualistic Approach

Educators in North America have long been committed to addressing the needs and difficulties of at-risk students, and there have been substantial efforts to design and implement effective research and intervention programs. Some intervention programs have enjoyed a degree of success (e.g., Meyer, Mitchell, Clementi, Clement, et al., 1993; Eggert, Thompson, Herting & Nicholas, 1994). However, significant and consistent positive results have apparently been difficult to achieve.

One indication of the limitations of the interventions implemented to date is the persistence of a high dropout rate. Despite dominant social pressures and harsh economic realities, dropout rates remain very high -- and dropping out can be argued to be a major at-risk behavior, or perhaps the logical end-point for students with consistent histories of other

at-risk behaviors. In 1991 the Government of Canada released a report identifying a national drop-out rate of 30 percent, the highest of any industrialized nation. Policy-makers facing the "information age" are counting on education as one of the keys to future national economic competitiveness. Such clear future needs serve to underscore the importance of designing more successful interventions for at-risk students. Moreover, having 30 per cent of a student body struggling and unhappy before deciding to drop out is sure to have a negative impact on other students' learning environments, on their teachers' morale, and on the culture of a school.

The present study was motivated by the view that one of the weaknesses in most current at-risk intervention literature is its heavy emphasis on an individualistic approach, rooted in the traditional therapeutic literature. "Dropout prevention efforts have usually targetted personal characteristics of students, dictating individually-based interventions, which have had little impact on the problem" (Srebnik & Elias, 1993). Interventions often involve one-on-one counseling or mentoring, personalized academic programs, and specialized seminars for students who are identified as being at-risk. These interventions can be quite effective for some students. However, in light of Srebnik and Elias' (1993) general critique, and the empirically indisputable persistence of a high dropout rate, new directions need to be explored.

The Need for an Intergroup Relations Approach

Social psychology would seem to be a discipline particularly well-suited to the non-individualistic study of at-risk students. However, social psychology, too, has tended to root itself in a rich, but somewhat limiting individualistic tradition (Taylor and Moghaddam, 1994). As the subdiscipline of psychology that is meant to link the social and psychological forces influencing behavior, it seems reasonable to expect social psychology to frequently move beyond the limitations of individual cognition and behavior to emphasize larger social issues like class structures, political movements, race, and ethnicity. However, investigations of the psychology of larger social units, such as groups, has been surprisingly sparse (e.g., Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994; Worchel & Austin, 1986).

Further, it has been noted that even when groups are considered in the social psychology literature, the emphasis rarely falls on the important and complex groups that are societally based and have open and changing memberships (Lawler, 1985; Taylor et al., 1994). Instead, the groups that have traditionally received attention are small, closed groups like those found in the workplace or therapeutic contexts. Indeed, many of the "groups" studied are artificially constructed to fit the confines and pragmatics of laboratory research.

The present study focused primarily on *socially* defined groups and the ways they interact. Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) define intergroup relations as "... any aspect of human interaction that involves individuals perceiving themselves as members of a social category, or being perceived by others as belonging to a social category" (p. 6). The issue of perceived membership and affiliation with social groups and social categories may be

central to understanding the social psychology of both well-behaved students and at-risk students.

There is some indirect evidence that social and intergroup dimensions may be important to the design of successful interventions with students at-risk. Research with juvenile delinquents, for example, has found that community based interventions that involve a delinquent's family and wider social community are more effective than traditional, more individualistic approaches (Gendreau & Ross, 1980) and that delinquents are less likely to re-offend if they are participating in programs that build community linkages for them (Ohlin, 1975, 1976, in Gendreau & Ross, 1980).

In addition, Urie Treisman (in Steele, 1990) has designed a program at the University of California at Berkeley to improve first year calculus performance among at-risk African-American students. Rather than treating the classes as a collection of individuals in need of remediation, students are instead put into problem solving groups that are set up as "groups of people who enjoy solving calculus problems" (Treisman, in Steele, 1990). These problem-solving groups not only lead to improved performance in first year calculus, but the graduation rate among students who participate is on par with white and Asian students at Berkeley. Normally, dropout rates among African-American students are found to be as much as two or three times as high as drop out rates for white and Asian students. It seems clear that there are distinctly social components to Treisman's intervention; students are put in dynamic, ongoing, supportive work groups that act as teams and contribute to a positive sense of association and social identity.

In a major study of 2 500 dropouts and 25 000 high school graduates that focused exclusively on school dropout rates, Pittman (1991) found that the variables most strongly related to dropping out "... reflected the influence of a student's social relationships within the school environment" (p.288).

These findings suggest that an intergroup approach has the potential to make a contribution to understanding at-risk students. Like many social environments, high school is often described as a place composed of many "cliques" -- groups that are clearly identified and identifiable as unique in character, membership, and group culture. Many, if not most students, belong to one clique or another (e.g., the jocks, browners, computer science geeks, preppies, home boys, easily identifiable friendship cliques). Indeed, high school is an environment characterized by adolescents seeking an identity and a place to belong. Erik Erikson identifies the central struggle of adolescence as "identity versus role confusion" (Erikson, 1968 in Burger, 1993). Considering the degree to which most "roles" are social in nature, one can easily cast Erikson's argument in social psychological and intergroup terms.

No matter how they are characterized, high school's social groupings appear to be manifestations of adolescent social drives -- social drives that are understandable in the context of Erikson's stage theory and individuals' quests for role *certainty*. Groups have their own norms which deviate in varying degrees from one another and from the "grand social norm" that the school is meant to represent and help define. When students embrace a set of norms, it can be expected that they also embrace the social groups and structures that define the norms, and this in turn involves accepting perceived "membership in a social

category." Such a social identity has implications both for intra and extra-group interactions.

In summary, then, an intergroup relations perspective on at-risk students appears to have considerable potential, and may be a particularly effective way of characterizing the high school environment in general.

Social Identity Theory

The apparent significance of "social identity" for adolescents directs attention to the theoretical framework of *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) as one potentially useful approach to understanding at-risk students. When it was first introduced, social identity theory was unique in positing an important link between group membership and individual psychological experience.

Initially, social identity theory received little attention outside the sphere of European social psychology. However, social identity theory has been gaining acceptance among prominent and influential scholars in North America (e.g., Brewer, 1993), and the European school's greater emphasis on social relations, and intergroup relations in particular, is a complementary shift in perspective for theorizing about, and attempting to address problems like those associated with at-risk students.

Based on the early cognitive studies of Henri Tajfel (e.g., 1957, 1959; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963), social identity theory argues that people are motivated to parse the world into comprehensible units -- sorting similar objects and individuals into manageable, de-individuated categories. On the social level, these manageable units are social groups.

The theory further asserts that individuals are motivated to achieve a social identity that is perceived to be both *positive* and *distinctive* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The pursuit of this social goal involves social categorization and social comparison. Individuals align themselves, the theory argues, with one or more social groups (or social categories) and begin an ongoing process of ingroup - outgroup comparison. Given the goals of positiveness and distinctiveness assumed by social identity theory, it follows that individual group members will be motivated to aggrandize the status of their own group while derogating the relative status of other groups.

Turner's (1987) refinement of social identity theory -- social categorization theory -- frames the process in these terms:

> First, people categorize and define themselves as members of a distinct social category or assign themselves a social identity; second they form or learn the stereotypic norms of that category; and third, they assign these norms to themselves and thus their behaviour becomes more normative as their category membership becomes salient (Hogg & McGarty, 1990, p. 15).

Distinctive groups provide their members with "norms, boundaries, goals, purposes and a social context" (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p.1). Groups not only *provide* norms, boundaries, goals and purposes, they also *reinforce* them. When immersed in a particular social group, the group's norms become an individual's reality.

Inner city youth, who by virtue of economic and opportunity deprivation do not perceive avenues for social mobility or stand out positively in the mainstream, are notorious for forming gangs that enculturate their members. Different linguistic traits, rites of passage, and even clothing all symbolize and entrench an alternative, distinctive and internally positive set of norms and dimensions for self-evaluation.

Social identity theory clearly has the potential to offer insight into the experiences and motivations of at-risk students. If at-risk students are members of anti-normative groups that provide and support *positive and distinctive* identities for them, a desire to remain in good standing with the groups may be a powerful incentive and motivation, in and of itself, that in turn keeps them at risk. Such groups could provide at-risk students with both structure *and* greater opportunities for esteem than the mainstream affords them.

"Disidentification"

An important and relatively new psychological concept that is entirely consistent with social identity theory is "disidentification" -- the process of psychologically distancing one's self from a particular referent. Although it is possible to "disidentify" from a non-social referent -- Claude Steele reports disidentifying from a musical instrument (1992) -- the focus of the present study, and most of Steele's work in the area, is *social* disidentification. Disidentification is applicable because distancing themselves from dominant social expectations is what at-risk students appear to do.

Steele (1992, 1990) has been an especially articulate advocate of the disidentification hypothesis as an explanation for certain persistent social problems among teens who belong to racial minorities. Steele (1992) points out that although African-American students in the United States often struggle with both implicit and explicit social barriers to success in the (predominately white) mainstream school system, researchers find that their failures appear to have little effect on their self-esteem. Intuitively, one would expect to find students who are failing and struggling academically to also be suffering from *low* self-esteem. Significantly, researchers have found that in the face of failure, instead of

valuing school achievement and making it a principal basis for self-esteem, African-American youth turn instead to their peer-group relations to bolster a positive sense of self. Specifically, these peer groups appear successful because of their capacity to establish new dimensions for self-evaluation, and new sets of normative standards and values. The students bond together to form tightly knit groups of African-American students, separate from the white culture and white mainstream that dominates the school system. In Steele's terms, they "disidentify" themselves from the social world and the social establishment where they feel they do not belong.

Disidentification, Steele argues, is a form of psychic self-defense. Where "... the prospects of gaining positive self-evaluations in a domain are particularly poor," Steele (1990) suggests, disidentification offers the "... possibility of reconstruing or realigning the self-concept so as to exclude a given domain as a basis of self-evaluation." Disidentification and social identity theory are compatible frameworks. Both explain shifts in social affiliation as moves that are defensive of an individual's self-image, and that are designed to promote a social identity that is positive and distinctive.

As a result of their disidentification, Steele (1992) argues, African-American youth are found to band together and identify with a unique African-American culture in which disidentification from white culture is an important norm. "Defectors are called 'oreos' or 'incognegroes'" (Steele, 1992, p. 75). African-American youth protect "... their global self-esteem by dis-identifying with those areas of life where they suffer threat of devaluation and [base] their self-esteem on those areas where their self-evaluation is more secure" (Steele, 1990). For these young people the primary issue, it seems, becomes one of group

membership and what group membership has to offer -- of defending esteem against assaults from perceived "outgroups" by devaluing dominant norms and standards in favour of different values, standards and expectations. In turn, the resulting disidentified group defines its boundaries and norms, and subsequently the social sanctions to be enacted against individuals perceived to be traitors to the ingroup.

From the point of view of Turner's (1987) self-categorization framework, it could be argued that in the face of personal devaluation by the school, at-risk youth shift the primary source of their identities from individual qualities and characteristics to qualities and characteristics defined for them by their anti-normative groups. When personal characteristics are painted as inadequate by failure of varying kinds, and by those who wield establishment power, a student's social group remains a possible source of positive and distinctive identity.

The application of disidentification as an explanation for certain social behaviors is not limited to Steele's (1990, 1992) analysis of racial minorities. The process of disidentification can also be framed as relevant to *any* student who is struggling with a school's mainstream culture and its expectations. In the school context, it can be argued that disidentification from school norms, values, and behavioral expectations is an excellent definition of "at-risk" status. Once students have begun severing emotional and intellectual ties to school values and behavioral expectations, what remains to bind them to schools and their academic programs?

In the context of disidentification, it appears that self-esteem can be defended and bolstered in a two-step process. First, there seems to be a social categorizing that

disidentifies individuals from the social group(s) that they experience as inaccessible or diminishing of their self-esteem. Second, self-esteem may rise as a new social group that provides a new, positive and distinctive social identity, with its accompanying new set of values, is embraced. There is some previous research to support this effect's presence in the school environment. Romanik and Blazer (1990), for example, conducted a very large survey study of at-risk and dropout students. They found that dropouts had higher self-esteem than at-risk students who were still in school. Consonant with the process posited here, Romanik and Blazer (1990) hypothesized that dropouts' self-esteem began to rise when they left and found contexts away from high school that were more supportive of their senses of self-worth.

If a new social identification occurs, to establish a distinctive social identity after disidentification, at-risk students can be expected to align themselves with a group that governs itself and its members by different rules and norms than the group from which they have disidentified. For example, if at-risk students disidentify from the well-behaved, academically focused scholastic mainstream groups that are distinctive for their good behavior and academic emphasis, the students should be expected to identify with a new social group that is distinctive in some *new* way (e.g., less academically focused, or less well-behaved). Further, according to the process posited by social identity and social categorization theories, the choice of a new group closes the door on the old group, because an individual's *new* "ingroup" must be aggrandized to the detriment of the *old* "ingroup." This is psychologically necessary to ensure the perception of one's new ingroup as both positive and distinctive relative to other groups.

If at-risk students have in fact disidentified with the school establishment and its representation of the social mainstream, its values and its institutions, and social identity theory's assumptions are valid, at-risk students may therefore turn to and immerse themselves in social groups whose norms are *less* likely to be rewarded, valued and appreciated by schools and society at large. Instead of struggling in a social situation that they find diminishing, at-risk students should instead be expected to seek social distinctiveness on new dimensions, with a new social group. Such a path represents the "way of least resistance," so following it is not only *reactive*, but also *proactive*, for an alienated student. As a form of psychological self-defense of esteem, one would expect adoption and on-going reinforcement of the new group's norms, attitudes and values to follow. Social reinforcements and social validation are powerful incentives -- especially to the adolescent struggling for a positive sense of identity.

At-risk behaviors may be characterized as "irrational" in that they often lead to a diminishment of mainstream social rewards, and often to negative reinforcements and punishments that take various forms. However, the disidentification and social identity hypotheses as applied to at-risk students point to a different interpretation. The persistence of at-risk behaviors in some students may in part be an consequence of choices to join anti-normative groups, and that the choices to join such groups may be *highly* rational. In a hierarchy of needs, feeling good about one's self in the here and now may be more pressing to an average adolescent than any long-term goals that are associated with the establishment's values. As such, it would not be surprising to find that struggling students disidentify with the system they are struggling with, only to embrace social groups that

support positive and distinctive social identities, and support self-esteem, at the expense of mainstream norms, values, and school-validated "rationality."

The social group as reinforcement has already been discussed at some length, and the role of consequent positive self-evaluations as a reward in the reinforcement system has also been identified. More explicit examination of the location of rewards as a function of social group membership in the school context needs to be explored. If students are part of a social group that is valued by the establishment, it is likely that the school provides substantial psychological rewards for them. Good students get good grades and praise from their teachers. Further, the media present such students as having bright futures, as being rising stars. Extended families will muse about "brilliant cousin Eddy" with admiration and pride. Athletes are affirmed by coaches, administrators and student leaders for their skills and contributions to school spirit. Student leaders are given perks and positive strokes in a variety of different ways. Membership alone in these groups comes with social and personal rewards from outside the groups themselves. External forces appear to support these groups' members' positive and distinctive social identities. The groups that are appreciated by the school establishment -- and in all likelihood by the community and media at large -- do not need a particularly formal or coherent intra-group structure to meet the social identity needs of their members. Being in the group -- a part of the social category -- is enough.

Alternatively, if students disidentify from a powerful school context and school establishment that does not validate and affirm them, the groups they turn to for identity support will need to provide and define new norms, reward systems, and possible positive

identities *for* them. Within the framework posited, anti-normative groups should be forced by their circumstances to support their members' positive and distinctive social identities *within the restricted confines of their groups.* Without the mass of wide mainstream social consensus and establishment approval to support the normative systems of these disidentified groups, one would expect the successful disidentified groups to exhibit a much more closed, coherent, and restrictive group structure than their school-validated cohorts. They are, after all, under perpetual esteem-threat from outsiders and outgroups that have greater social power than they do. In such a context, one would hypothesize that loyalties must be fierce, and expectations comparatively clear, in order to accomplish the goals of positive and distinctive social identities for an anti-normative group's members.

This hypothesis that anti-normative groups will exhibit a coherent structure with behavioral sanctions is indirectly supported by research on the capacity of minorities to survive and even influence majority group behavior by sending a *clear, simple, consistent message repeatedly* (Moscovici, 1976, 1980, 1985). One implication of this research is that heterogeneity of opinion and presentation necessarily *undermines* the potential status and influence of minority groups like anti-normative high school cliques. Homogeneity, on the other hand, may bolster group influence and resilience to majority pressures.

Therefore, one would hypothesize that the more disidentified a student group is from a school's normative value system, the more coherent its internal group structure should be expected to be. In exchange for vigilance, at-risk students should receive what they seek -- a social basis for positive and distinctive self-evaluations and assistance in resolving identity struggles satisfactorily; something the schools fail to provide for them.

This argument, if valid, would help to explain why at-risk students can become so difficult to reach using individualistic interventions. An individual mentor would have to overcome not only the attitudes of a given at-risk student, but the entire social system in which he or she may be ensconced.

Mediating Individual Factors: Self-Categorization Theory's Contribution

Turner's (1987) self-categorization theory, as noted earlier, emphasizes that the source of individual identity varies along a continuum between individual and group characteristics. Depending on circumstances and individual needs, people may define themselves in personalized and individualistic terms, or somewhat depersonalized terms that are shaped by a sense of group or social identity.

Having defined at-risk status and disidentification from the school as essentially synonymous, the contribution of Turner's (1987) theoretical framework to the present investigation is that it suggests that there may be two distinctive kinds of at-risk students. The first group would be those at-risk students who are disidentified from their schools, but feel very weak links to their chosen social groups. Such students may have a weak link to their chosen social group for a number of reasons; they may not be accepted by the groups they have chosen, or they may feel ambivalence about their choice or their disidentification from the mainstream in the first place. Ambivalence may be encouraged by parental disapproval, or negative social comparisons with mainstream groups. Based on social identity theory and the disidentification hypothesis, at-risk students who are not closely connected with a disidentified student group should be expected to struggle a great deal with esteem issues.

The second category of at-risk students would be those who are disidentified from their schools, but connect very strongly with their social groups and derive a significant sense of positive identity from their disidentified group memberships. Unlike the disidentified but weakly connected category of at-risk students, if social identity theory and the disidentification hypothesis are valid in this context, at-risk students who feel closely connected to their disidentified groups should have relatively high self-esteem as a result of the bolstering effects of group identification in the context of their personal identity struggles.

Hypotheses Concerning At-Risk Students from a Social Identity Perspective

One of the features of the present investigation is that it invited students to report on their own perceptions of high school's social realities and categorizations. The experimenter did not present a finite list of options, but instead allowed students to define the social environment themselves. If the theories discussed thus far have any validity, they should be manifest in students' perceptions. To set the stage for further analysis, I will report on the descriptive information students generated. It was anticipated that students *would* engage in social categorization, establish social group allegiances, and describe their own social groups in positive and distinct terms relative to other social groups they perceive in their schools. At-risk students were expected to belong to social groups that define themselves as being disidentified from the norms, attitudes, and values of the school establishment. Further, is was expected that such group disidentification would be manifest in greater association with anti-normative behaviors and lesser association with pro-normative than identified groups.

In the context of the theoretical orientation of the present study, two central hypotheses were proposed.

First, it was hypothesized that **groups that are disidentified from their schools' values, norms, and behavioral expectations will exhibit greater group cohesion than groups that are not disidentified.** Specifically, it was hypothesized that disidentified groups would:

(a) be perceived to be more distinctive by their members than identified group members perceived *their* groups to be;

(b) be composed of members who were more sensitive to the number different social groups ("outgroups") in the high school setting than members of identified groups;

(c) have more closed structures than identified groups;

(d) be perceived to have more homogeneous memberships than identified groups; and

(e) be perceived as more likely than identified groups to enact behavioral sanctions against members who stray from internal group norms and expectations.

The second central hypothesis was that **there is a strong relationship between self-esteem and possessing a social identity that group members perceive to be positive and distinctive.** Four specific hypotheses that flow from this general premise were proposed: (a) that students who were highly connected to a social group would have higher self-esteem than students were not as closely connected to a social group; (b) that members of school-identified groups would have higher self-esteem than members of

disidentified groups; (c) that members of disidentified groups who feel closely connected to their groups would have higher self-esteem than members of disidentified groups who feel more loosely associated with their groups; and (d) that a strong connection with a disidentified group would result in a level of self-esteem comparable to even the connected *identified* group members.

Method

Participants

Six hundred and forty-four participants (337 males, 306 females) from two secondary schools in southern Ontario participated in this questionnaire study in the last month of the 1994/95 school year. The study was focused primarily on grade 9 and grade 11 students, though there was some minor representation of students in grades 10, 12 and OAC in the total sample. Table 1 reports the gender and grade distribution of the total sample. Heavy representation of grade 9 students relative to grade 11 students in the sample is an artifact of school programming structures. In the larger of the two secondary schools involved in the study, the grade 9 program was unsemestered, so all grade 9 students in the school were accessible through a common course (English) at a given time during the year. However, the structure of grades 10 through OAC in the same school was semestered. Consequently, only half of the grade 11 students were accessible through any one course of study. In the other school, all grade levels were unsemestered.

Insert Table 1 about here

In order to maximize the number of students from grades 9 and 11 who participated in each school, a single required academic subject was selected for each grade level in each school, and all students enrolled in that subject were asked to participate and provided with parental consent forms. In one school, grade 9 and 11 English students were recruited. In the other school, grade 9 math students and grade 11 science students were recruited. The selection of academic subjects for recruiting purposes was influenced by the particular circumstances of the schools involved. Taking into account that half the grade 11 students were unavailable in one school because of semestering, the present sample represents approximately 65% of the available grade 9 and 11 populations in the two schools involved, at the time of the study. There is no reason to believe that the grade 11 students that were unaccessible in the one school were systematically any different than those who were accessible.

Absenteeism and other school activities accounted for the majority of the remaining 35%. Very few students who were present declined participation or had parents who withheld consent. Because of the study's timing late in the school year, school officials suggested that the most at-risk students may have already dropped out, or were likely to be disproportionately represented among the absent students. This may have been true. If so, it was likely particularly true of grade 11 students, whose age permits them greater access to alternatives (e.g., cars for transportation ,etc.). Also worth noting, however, is that if at-risk grade 11 students had already dropped out, then the most at-risk students may not be

represented in the present sample, and any hypothesis-consistent results are likely to be somewhat muted by using less disidentified students as the "highly disidentified" group.

Materials

A single questionnaire comprised of three sections was administered to each participant. The questionnaire made use of a nine point Likert scale response format for the majority of items. However, there were a few short answer and multiple choice questions included where those formats were more appropriate. The complete questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

Part one of the questionnaire solicited personal information that included basic demographics (e.g., age, gender, parental education level), self-reports of school success (e.g. grades) and the nature of respondents' relationships with the school establishment, and individuals' group affiliations and assessments of their school's social map. Students were asked, among other things, how well they got along with teachers, how much they enjoyed school, how important different people were to them, and how they felt about particular academic subjects. Also embedded in part one of the questionnaire was the Rosenberg measure of global self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). The Rosenberg scale is the most commonly used unidimensional measure of global self-esteem in the literature. It is *not* a state measure, and its results are not generally affected by mood or fleeting states of mind. Included in the Rosenberg scales are items like "I feel that I have a number of good qualities," and "I wish I could have more respect for myself." At the end of part 1, participants were asked to spontaneously generate a list of as many different "large social groups" as they could identify in their schools. This ensured that when students were later

called upon to comment on their schools' social groups, they were responding to their own perceptions rather than those imposed on them by the researcher.

Part two of the questionnaire asked respondents to identify their own primary social group (from the list generated at the end of part 1) and to answer a number of questions about the nature of the group, its relationship to the school establishment and other student groups, and the kinds of behaviors that are associated with the group. Included in part two were questions like: "how much do you like your social group," "how central is your social group to your life? In other words, how much does your social group affect your day to day life," and "how difficult is it for somebody to be accepted into your social group?"

If participants did not feel they belonged to a large social group, but that they had a close circle of friends they "hung out" with, they were asked to identify their social group as "friends."

Finally, part three of the questionnaire parallels quite closely the content of part two. The difference, however, was that instead of assessing the nature of a group to which the respondent belonged, part three assessed respondents' perceptions of a social group they *did not* belong to. Specifically, it asked them to assess the nature of the first group on their spontaneously generated lists that they didn't belong to. To illustrate the difference between parts 2 and 3 further, where the first question of part two reads "how much do you like your social group," the first question of part three read "how much do you like *this* social group?" The final question in part three was the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center's happiness question (Andrews & Robinson, 1991).

A number of composite variables were computed using questionnaire items. Principle components analysis was used to aid in the design of some of the composite variables used, and Cronbach's alpha was always considered. For the most part, statistical tests supported the *a priori* theoretical assumptions about appropriate variable compositions. These variables will be identified and described in the Results and Discussion section. The composition of each variable is further detailed in Appendix B.

Procedure

Recruitment. All students in the selected grade 9 and grade 11 courses received an information letter and a parental consent form. Students were informed that their questionnaires could not be used unless they returned a completed parental consent form. It was made clear to students that participation was completely voluntary, but that non-participation would not result in a period off. Those who did not participate in the study spent the questionnaire time in supervised study areas.

Setting. Questionnaires were completed in groups of one to four classes. Whenever possible, smaller testing groups were used. On average, questionnaires were administered to two classes at a time (approximately 50 students). The same researcher administered all the questionnaires. This was done to ensure continuity of approach across groups.

Questionnaire Procedure. Study participants were thanked for their willingness to participate in the research project, and were reassured that all their answers were strictly confidential. It was explained that, although the questionnaires each had an individualized code number, the only people who could connect a questionnaire with the person who completed it were the researchers. Nobody from their schools will ever know what they, as

individuals, had to say or how they responded. The researcher then went on to emphasize the significance of the research project and the importance of honest responses. It was pointed out that trying to be "funny" was pointless on a confidential questionnaire, and that inaccurate responses might only come back to haunt students if policy decisions were made on the basis of the questionnaire data. More importantly, however, it was emphasized that the questionnaire posed a unique opportunity for all students to have an equal voice in communicating their experiences to the school officials who make decisions that affect their lives and their educations.

Participants were told that the researcher would go through the entire questionnaire with them, and that it was extremely important not to work ahead. In this fashion, the researcher was able to pace students, and keep tight controls on any distractions that may have arisen had subjects been left to proceed at their own paces. Further, students were encouraged to ask questions if anything seemed unclear, and to let the researcher know if the pace being set was too fast or too slow. Before beginning, students were offered an opportunity to ask any questions they had about the study and the questionnaire procedures.

Administering the questionnaire took, on average, between 45 and 55 minutes. The pace was kept brisk to avoid students ruminating on particular questions. It was hoped that the necessity of relying on first and early responses would have a positive effect on the frankness and honesty of the data collected. When the questionnaires were completed, the researcher collected them and answered any questions participants had. Finally, the researcher informed the participants that the results of the study would be presented at their school in the following academic year. Participants, their families, and other interested

individuals were invited to attend the information session and provide feedback to the researchers.

Results and Discussion

The results will be presented in two stages: (1) a general descriptive analysis of high school's social map as students perceived it; and (2) the results as they pertain to the study's two central hypotheses.

The Social Structure of High Schools

The social structure of high school is characterized by a multitude of social groups that are perceived to have distinctive characteristics. Students identified 57 different social groups in their schools. Social groups might be described as social categories, rather than cliques. For example, "bangers" as opposed to "Bill, Sue and Janice."

In order to describe the social groupings in the high schools studied, as perceived by the participants involved in this study, two tables have been provided. Table 2 reports how members of several frequently mentioned social groups perceived their own groups. Table 3 reports how students who are *not* members of those same groups perceived them along the same dimensions. These tables, and the descriptions of the groups that follow, are provided for descriptive purposes and to serve as a context for testing the two central hypotheses.

Insert Table 2 and Table 3 about here

Six groups were selected for this descriptive analysis. The groups were selected on the basis that they were among those most commonly mentioned by participants in this study. Three of the groups -- bangers, druggies, and hippies -- can be described as "disidentified" groups because their members tend to describe the groups as disidentified from the school. By contrast, the other three groups -- brains, jocks, and preps -- can better be described as "identified" groups.

The mean scores for each group on four key variables are presented in the tables for illustrative purposes. The four variables are: "group disidentification," "association with disidentified behaviors," "school's perceptions of the group," and "students' perceptions of the group."

The group disidentification variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) included 4 items: "How do members of your social group generally feel about the school's staff and administration?," "How often do you think your social group, as a whole, is discriminated against by teachers and administrators at your school?," "How do you think the school's teachers and administration (vice-principals, principal) see your social group?," and "Compared to all the other student social groups how high do you think your social group's status is in the opinion of the school's staff and administration?"

The second variable listed in tables 2 and 3 -- "association with disidentified behaviors" -- is a composite variable that gages the degree to which group members report anti-normative behaviors to be associated with their groups, and the degree to which normative behaviors are associated with their groups (Cronbach's $\alpha = .866$). The higher the score on this variable, the greater the degree to which anti-normative behaviors are

associated with the group, and the less the degree to which normative behaviors are associated with the group. Anti-normative behaviors assessed included smoking, doing drugs, giving teachers and administrators a hard time, partying alot, alot of sexual activity, and breaking school rules. Pro-normative behaviors assessed included playing sports, being involved in school activities, and getting good marks in school. Pro-normative behavior items were reverse coded for the purpose of inclusion in the composite variable.

The "school's perceptions of the group" composite variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .786$) included items such as "Compared to all the other student social groups, how high do you think your social group's status is in the opinion of the school's staff and administration?" Its purpose was to determine how the school establishment was perceived to view given groups.

The "students' perceptions of the group" variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .683$) included three items: "Compared to all the other social groups in your school, how high do you think your social group's status is in the opinion of other students?," "How do students outside your social group see your group?," and "How much do you think the average student in your school would like to be a member of your social group?" Similar to the "school's perceptions" variable, the "students' perceptions" variable was designed to determine how non-group-member students were generally perceived to view given groups.

Under the heading "Disidentification" in Table 2, it is clear that the groups labelled "disidentified" at the beginning of this section have disidentification scores well above the average for the whole sample. Consequently, as one would expect, the groups referred to as "identified" have disidentification scores well below the average for the whole sample.

A profile of disidentified, versus identified groups emerges from Table 2. Examining the groups' scores on the "associated with disidentified behaviors" variable, it is apparent that the bangers (M = 58.69), druggies (M = 65.94), and hippies (M = 57.75) scored significantly above the sample mean (M = 40.63) on the degree to which they perceive anti-normative behaviors to be associated with their groups. Bangers, druggies, and hippies are not alone in that perception. The second column of Table 3 demonstrates that other students also associate anti-normative behaviors with those groups. In contrast, brains (M = 20.71), jocks (M = 40.16), and preps (M = 25.92) see their behaviors to be perceived as highly normative (Table 2), and their peers clearly agree (Table 3). Interestingly, the jocks see themselves, and are seen by others, to be the "bad guys" among the "good guys." They seem to be positioned in a kind of middle-ground where anti-normative vs. normative behavioral associations are concerned.

The results on the "school's perceptions of the group" variable are consistent with the hypotheses about identified and disidentified groups. Bangers (M = 7.1), druggies (M = 6.5), and hippies (M = 8.08) believe their schools feel much less positively about them than the brains (M = 16.21), jocks (M = 13.44), and preps (M = 15.25) believe their schools feel about them. The same pattern is clearly evident in Table 3. Other students see bangers (M = 5.83), druggies (M = 3.68), and hippies (M = 8.5) as being seen much less favourably by the school establishment than brains (M = 9.52), jocks (M = 11.12) and preps (M = 14.74). However, note that for all groups except the hippies, students outside any given groups (Table 3) perceived outgroups to be less favoured by the school than the students who were actually members of the groups perceived themselves to be (Table 2).

This same pattern of results is evident in the "students' perceptions of the group" variable. Although the pattern is similar to that identified in the "school's perceptions of the group" findings, there is a critical difference in the spread of results. While students in the disidentified groups saw their groups to be viewed much less positively by the school establishment than did students in identified groups, they rank their own status among other students much more comparably to the way identified group members rank their status among other students. While there was almost a 10 point spread between group means on the 18 point school perception variable, there was only slightly more than a 5 point spread between group means on the 27 point student perception variable, where participants were ranking their own groups. A similar pattern is present in Table 3, where participants scored groups other than their own. This seems to convey that students perceive the school establishment to have clear, comparatively bipolar perceptions of student groups based on identification status, while students are perceived to be more tolerant and accepting. Perhaps this reflects a dominant, non-judgmental socially desirable trait among students that contrasts sharply with the schools' apparently narrower band of behaviors and characteristics that are communicated to be desirable.

Also interesting to note is the ranking of the "brains" group status. Both the brains themselves, and the non-brains ranked the brains group very poorly in terms of student popularity and status among students. This is certainly not an unexpected finding in light of most people's anecdotal assessments of the "browners'" status in high school social maps.

There are at least two possible explanations that might explain the "friends" category included in Table 2. As noted earlier, "friends" was the category participants

ascribed their membership to if they didn't feel a part of a "large social group," but did feel connected to a small group of friends. The vast majority of respondents who used the "friends" category to describe their social group were grade 9 students. Grade 11 students were far more likely to slot themselves into a larger social affiliation. This is conceivably an artifact of some powerful structural components of the high school setting. Grade 9 students in Ontario are "de-streamed;" that is, grade 9 students are all in the same classes, regardless of ability level. Their timetables are full, with no opportunities during spare periods to relate to any significant degree with non-grade-9 students. Further, grade 9 students have a much higher proportion of their classes with the same classmates than do grade 11 students. Grade 9 students simply do not have much opportunity to connect with or join most of the large social groupings in the high school context, and it is therefore not surprising that they do not identify themselves closely with those large social groups. Their social map seems to be a carry-over from the smaller groupings characteristic of senior elementary school.

Second, because of the wide variety of little cliques that may fall into this category, the "friends" designation does not distinguish between identified and disidentified groups, per se. Some friendship cliques may be far more disidentified than "druggies" are, on average, while other friendship cliques may be far more identified than "brains" are, on average. The diversity of the friendship cliques described by participants is evidenced by how closely the "friends" means mirror the sample means for the variables presented in Table 2. In part to more effectively capture the "friends," the present study focuses on high

and low group disidentification levels as reported by individuals, rather than on specific group categories.

Also worth noting with respect to the six groups presented in both tables is the academic performances of the groups' members. Supportive of this investigation's assertion that disidentification and at-risk status are comparable, if not synonymous, constructs is the mean academic averages reported by the different groups' members. In keeping with being "at-risk" groups, bangers ($\underline{M}$ = 67.6%), hippies ($\underline{M}$ = 69.3%), and druggies ($\underline{M}$ = 66.0%) all report significantly lower academic averages than brains ($\underline{M}$ = 88.1%), jocks ($\underline{M}$ = 74.3%), and preps ($\underline{M}$ = 76.8%). Poor academic performance has probably had the longest history as a predictor of at-risk status.

Before continuing it is important to confirm that disidentified groups *are*, in fact, the groups of choice for at-risk, disidentified students. A chi-square analysis was performed to determine whether individual disidentification status and the disidentification status of social groups were independent of one another. In other words, was there a relationship between an individual's status and the status of the individual's group, and if so, do disidentified individuals disproportionately elect to take up membership in disidentified groups like the bangers, druggies, and hippies? The results indicate that individual and group disidentification are indeed related to one another, chi square (4, $\underline{N}$ = 644) = 438.85, $\underline{p}$ < .001. Further, an examination of table 4 reveals that disidentified individuals choose disidentified groups over identified groups in a ratio of almost 2:1, while identified individuals choose identified groups in a ratio of 3:1 over disidentified groups. Not surprisingly, at-risk students opt for membership in at-risk groups, while students who are

not at risk opt for groups that more closely identify with the school establishment and its norms.

Insert Table 4 about here

Moving beyond the groups identified in the tables to the whole sample, this is an appropriate place to elaborate on the relationship between disidentified group status and anti-normative behaviors in the whole sample. Using a median split on levels of group disidentification, it was clear in the total sample that members of disidentified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 52.54) saw their groups as much more associated with anti-normative behaviors and less associated with pro-normative behaviors than members of identified groups saw their groups to be ($\underline{M}$ = 30.17), $\underline{F}(1,567) = 499.00$, $\underline{p} < .001$.

Additionally, disidentified group members in general ($\underline{M}$ = 8.82) report more detentions in a year than identified group members ($\underline{M}$ = 1.38), $\underline{F}(1,574) = 42.61$, $\underline{p}<.001$. Not surprisingly then, disidentified group members ($\underline{M}$ =10.96) also report more trips to the Vice Principal or Principal than identified group members ($\underline{M}$ = 1.92), $\underline{F}(1,576) = 43.87$, $\underline{p} < .001$. The data also indicates that disidentified group members ($\underline{M}$ = 1.95) skip more classes a week on average than identified group members ($\underline{M}$ =.44), $\underline{F}(1,576) = 44.93$, $\underline{p} < .001$. And in keeping with the general picture this data paints, disidentified group members ($\underline{M}$ =4.59) enjoy school significantly less than identified group members ($\underline{M}$ =6.01), $\underline{F}(1,575) = 80.53$, $\underline{p}<.001$.

The conclusion of this part of the descriptive analysis is that high schools do have highly diverse student bodies that are made up of many distinctive social groups, and that the social groups can be meaningfully categorized as identified or disidentified from the school establishment, its norms, and values. In addition to confirmation of a diverse social map, there is clear evidence of in-group and out-group biases, and a customary tendency to make negative generalizations about out-groups.

Group Disidentification and Group Cohesion

What distinguishes disidentified groups from identified groups, besides the disidentification status of their members? How, if at all, do disidentified groups uniquely cater to the psychological needs of their members? The first central hypothesis of the present study was that "groups that are disidentified from their schools' values, norms, and behavioral expectations will exhibit greater group cohesion than groups that are not disidentified." Specifically, it was predicted that disidentified groups would:

(a) be perceived to be more distinctive by their members than identified group members perceived *their* groups to be;

(b) have members who are more sensitive to the number different social groups ("outgroups") in the high school setting than members of identified groups;

(c) have more closed structures than identified groups;

(d) be perceived to have more homogeneous memberships than identified groups; and

(e) be perceived as more likely than identified groups to enact behavioral sanctions against members who stray from internal group norms and expectations.

In this section, one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted on composite variables, using a median split on group disidentification as the categorical variable. The following sections coincide with the five subsidiary hypotheses to hypothesis one, as outlined above.

Distinctiveness. Asked to assess how different their social groups were from the rest of the social groups in their schools, members of disidentified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 6.01) described their groups as more distinctive than members of identified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 5.50) described their groups to be, $\underline{F}(1, 577) = 8.11$, $\underline{p} < .006$. Since part of the social identity of a disidentified group is that of being distanced from dominant norms, it stands to reason that such a social identity would also place greater emphasis on distinctiveness relative to the norm than the social identity associated with identified groups would. Of course, it is also possible that the "distinctiveness" scores accurately reflect reality; that disidentified groups really *are* more distinctive.

Sensitivity to Social Diversity and Out-group Awareness. If disidentified groups and their members feel under greater social threat than identified groups, is this evident in a heightened awareness or perception of social diversity in the schools?

The last question in part one of the questionnaire asked students to identify as many distinctive social groups as they could. For each participant, a variable was computed that was equal to the number of different groups identified. Using this group count variable, it was possible to determine that members of disidentified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 7.56) do seem to perceive greater diversity in their social surroundings than members of identified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 6.60), $\underline{F}(1, 577) = 14.22$, $\underline{p} < .001$.

Closed Structure. By performing an ANOVA on a composite variable that included assessments of how hard group members perceived joining their groups to be, and how likely their groups were to enact behavioral sanctions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .52$), it was revealed that disidentified group members saw their groups ($M = 8.58$) as more closed than members of identified groups saw their groups to be ($M = 6.91$), $F(1, 581) = 29.553$, $p < .001$. This confirms the hypothesis and supports the applicability of social identity theory, which argues that everyone is motivated to view their social identities positively. Of course, students who disidentify from the dominant school norms evidently do not feel positively affirmed by the dominant culture. In the face of dominant and pervasive school norms and expectations, one of the only available ways to ensure positive social identity is to draw the group in more closely. Considering the fact that the "socially desirable" high school culture is a laid back and open one, the fact that the difference in means is as large as it is, is quite surprising. In other words, it would have been conceivable to record little reported difference, even in the face of a massive real difference.

It must be acknowledged that Crohnbach's alpha for the closed composite variable is somewhat modest. This does not invalidate the finding, but simply suggests that the variable may be somewhat less precise in measuring its attendant construct than the other composite variables presented in this investigation.

Homogeneity. In a similar vein, it was hypothesized that members of disidentified groups would report greater levels of homogeneity among their groups' memberships on dimensions like attitudes, values, and attire, both because the groups are seen to be more closed, and because homogeneity, or the perception of it, heightens the sense of having a

coherent social identity. A homogeneity composite variable was computed including subjects' assessments of their groups' homogeneity along dimensions that included: race, religion, attitudes, values, attire, behavior, and music preferences. In this case, lower numbers mean greater homogeneity. As predicted, members of disidentified groups perceived greater homogeneity ($\underline{M}$ = 30.28) in their groups than members of identified groups perceived in their groups ($\underline{M}$ = 33.69), $\underline{F}(1, 510) = 12.94$, $\underline{p} < .001$.

Behavioral Sanctions. One possible explanation for greater homogeneity would be more stringent policing of group norms, values, and behavioral expectations. Such policing might also serve to ensure coherence as well as homogeneity, and consequently bolster the potential positive impact of a given social identity for a student who might otherwise struggle socially.

Disidentified student groups *do* seem to use this strategy. When asked how likely it was that group members deviating from group norms would be given a hard time, members of disidentified groups reported a significantly greater likelihood ($\underline{M}$ = 4.21) than did members of identified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 3.43), $\underline{F}$ (1, 573) = 15.00, $\underline{p} < .001$.

The Disidentified Group: A Short Summary

Compared to identified groups, then, disidentified groups' structures are more coherent, their group memberships are more homogeneous, they are more likely to police members' behaviors and sanction behavior that strays from group norms, and they are more associated with anti-normative behaviors. Furthermore, a picture of a besieged experience emerges as one couples these factors with a tendency for disidentified groups to see the high school's social map as fragmented and diverse.

Overall, the picture of disidentified groups that emerges is one that supports all of the initial hypotheses. When under attack, circle the wagons, know who your friends are, have clear expectations of everyone in the camp, and keep a close eye on anyone who seems inclined to break ranks. For at-risk students, as for others, there is strength in numbers. The cost, however, to both the individual students and to the social system, is that at-risk groups appear structured in ways that shield at-risk students from interventions that might serve them and the common good.

Self-Esteem, Group Connection, and At-Risk Students

The second central hypothesis was that **there is a strong relationship between self-esteem and possessing a social identity that group members perceive to be positive and distinctive.** Specifically, it was hypothesized: (a) that students who were highly connected with a social group would have better self-esteem than students were not as closely connected with a social group; (b) that members of school-identified groups would have better self-esteem than members of disidentified groups; (c) that members of disidentified groups who feel closely connected to their groups would have better self-esteem than members of disidentified groups who feel more loosely associated with their groups; and (d) that a strong connection with a disidentified group would facilitate a level of self-esteem comparable to even the connected *identified* group members.

Group Positiveness Evaluations. Before continuing with the specific self-esteem hypotheses, it is important to first note how the members of disidentified and identified groups viewed the positiveness of their groups, and how they felt the school establishment viewed their groups.

In order to assess differences in group positiveness evaluations between disidentified and identified group members, an ANOVA was performed on the question "how much do you like your social group?" As predicted, despite the large sample size, there was no significant difference between how positively disidentified group members ($\underline{M}$ = 7.57) and identified group members ($\underline{M}$ = 7.72) felt about their respective groups, $\underline{F}$ (1,584) = 1.59, $\underline{p}$ > .20.

Further, bolstering Steele's argument that disidentified individuals psychologically work to exclude "... a given domain as a basis for self-evaluations," members of disidentified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 7.95) felt that the schools' teachers and administrators saw their groups significantly less positively than members of identified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 14.04) felt their groups were seen, $\underline{F}$(1,577) = 817.73, $\underline{p}$ < .001. Following Steele's logic then, even though members of disidentified groups feel their groups are viewed comparatively negatively by the school, they seem to parse those evaluations out of their overall evaluations of the positiveness of their groups. As noted, they feel just as good about their groups as identified group members feel about theirs, even though an obvious source of possible validation -- the school -- fails to validate them. How does a school reach a student or group of students once they have decided that what the school thinks of them, their attitudes, and their behaviors just does not matter?

Group Connection. If social identity theory is accurate, then regardless of the disidentification status of their social groups, students who connect with their groups -- who have a strong social identity -- should have higher global self-esteem than those who are more socially lost. As described earlier, a composite variable reflecting the degree of

individuals' connection with their groups was computed, and a median split was performed on that variable to sort participants into high and low group connection categories.

Students who are strongly connected with their groups *do* feel better about themselves ($\underline{M}$ = 68.91) than students who have a weaker connection with their groups ($\underline{M}$ = 64.32), $\underline{F}(1, 589) = 16.37$, $\underline{p} < .001$. Using the University of Michigan Survey Center's happiness question data provides converging evidence of the benefits of a strong social identity. Students who feel that they really belong to their groups ($\underline{M}$ = 1.79) report a higher level of happiness than those who are more socially disconnected ($\underline{M}$ = 1.99), $\underline{F}(1, 595) = 16.50$, $\underline{p} < .001$. These results are consistent with some recent findings on the self-esteem effects of group identification (e.g., Bat-Chava, 1994).

Disidentified Groups vs. Identified Groups. As predicted, members of disidentified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 62.62) suffer from lower self-esteem than members of groups that are more identified with the school establishment ($\underline{M}$ = 69.92), $\underline{F}(1,574) = 41.53$, $\underline{p} < .001$. Similarly, members of disidentified groups report a lower level of happiness ($\underline{M}$ = 2.00) than members of identified groups ($\underline{M}$ = 1.79), $\underline{F}(1,577) = 16.90$, $\underline{p} < .001$. Both of these findings are consistent with the reasoning already presented; those that who connected with identified groups benefit from the weight and influence of establishment reinforcements, affirmations, and validations.

Having established the general esteem benefits of both a strong social identity, and specifically the esteem benefits of a strong connection with an "identified" social group, the question that remains is whether there are in fact two groups of *at-risk* (disidentified) students that can be defined on the basis of their levels of connection with their student

social groups. And further, if there are two such groups of at-risk students, does the data suggest that they are likely to require distinctive kinds of interventionary efforts as a function of such distinctions? These are the critical questions of the present investigation.

The Benefits of Group Connection for At-Risk Students. If, as predicted, disidentified students are able to moderate the negative self-esteem effects of being disidentified students by developing a strong connection to a disidentified group, then their behavior would have to be viewed as highly rational.

As predicted, a sense of strong social connection helps members of disidentified groups considerably. A planned comparison revealed that members of disidentified groups who feel they really belong in their groups ($M = 66.26$) have significantly higher global self-esteem than members of disidentified groups who feel less connected socially ($M = 59.58$), $F(1, 565) = 16.38$, $p < .001$. Similarly, members of disidentified groups who feel strongly connected to their social groups ($M = 1.86$) report a significantly greater level of happiness than members of disidentified groups who feel less connected socially ($M = 2.10$), $F(1, 568) = 10.69$, $p < .002$. The socially connected at-risk student and the socially disconnected at-risk student are clearly distinct in terms of their probability of suffering from unhappiness and low self-esteem. Social connection clearly has great benefits for members of disidentified groups.

There is a further finding that supports the argument that at-risk students who are strongly connected to at-risk groups are acting rationally. It has already been established that *identified* student groups benefit from powerful establishment support that disidentified student groups are deprived of. Interestingly, despite the great difference that level of

social group connection makes for *disidentified* group members, the social rewards of being associated with *identified* groups are so great that there is *no* significant difference in self-esteem scores for identified group members as a function of *their* levels of connection with their groups, F (1, 565) = 1.88, $p > .17$. The possible benefits of such group connections for identified group members are washed out by the more powerful benefits of being identified with the establishment.

Remarkably then, students with a high level of social connection to disidentified groups have self esteem scores (M = 66.26) that are virtually indistinguishable from the grand mean for the sample (M = 66.42). In fact, despite the power of establishment rewards for school-identified groups, the self-esteem scores of highly connected members of disidentified groups (M = 66.26) are *not* significantly different from the self-esteem scores of loosely connected members of *identified* groups (M = 68.83), $F(1,565)=2.374$, $p > .12$. Similarly, identified group members as a whole (M = 1.79) are *not* significantly happier than highly connected members of disidentified groups (M = 1.86), F (1,568) = 1.22, $p > .27$.

Dissatisfaction and unhappiness can motivate significant personal changes. How do you motivate such changes for at-risk students who are neither dissatisfied nor unhappy?

Summary of Self-Esteem Findings. Evidently, then, there *are* two groups of disidentified, at-risk students that can be meaningfully distinguished from one another on the basis of how socially connected they feel to their social groups. Those students who become at-risk by disidentifying from dominant school norms and values tend to join disidentified student groups, and those who feel they belong in those disidentified groups appear to reap significant rewards in terms of self-esteem and happiness, while those that do

not feel well connected appear to suffer all the more. These findings should have significant implications for the way schools approach at-risk student interventions and services.

Implications for At-Risk Student Interventions: The Bottom Line

To date, schools have tended to take a fairly individualistic approach to at-risk student interventions. Such individualistic interventions include personal counselling, mentoring programs, and specially catered academic programs. The present study's findings suggest that such interventions may have some positive impact on reconnecting those at-risk students who are *socially lost* to the schools. At-risk students who do not feel they belong with their disidentified groups have little to lose by violating their groups' internal norms, and they may experience a caring and concerned mentor, or a thoughtful guidance counsellor, as a social life-line. Socially lost at-risk students are probably those most likely to simply drop out of school. The school offers them little reason to stay, and the student social scene does not do much better. Why stay in a place and a system that you experience as unpleasant and personally diminishing?

On the other hand, the at-risk students who connect strongly with their disidentified groups may be at lower risk of actually dropping out, but they are perhaps at even higher risk of academic failure and ongoing behavioral sanctions from the school establishment than their socially lost peers. They may be less likely to drop out because a source of significant esteem for them -- the disidentified group -- is at school. An increased risk of academic failure may result from the closed, cohesive disidentified social groups' reinforcement of anti-normative attitudes and behaviors. These students, after all, appear to

rely heavily on their student social groups for a boost to their self-esteem, and for a greater level of happiness.

Those issues, however, seem secondary in importance relative to the biggest challenge the at-risk student who is highly connected to a disidentified group poses. How do you reconnect a student to the school's norms, values, and behavioral expectations when the student's self-esteem first suffered at the school's hands, only to be buoyed by connection to a disidentified group with clear, anti-normative expectations, a cohesive structure, a defensive outlook on the world outside the group, and a tendency to behaviorally sanction group members whose behaviors deviate from the group's norms?

Traditional individualistic interventions appear likely to be ineffective where this group of socially connected at-risk students is concerned. How can a single mentor with other demands on his/her time replace the social reinforcement of a cohesive, valued social group of peers? What can a counsellor say in therapy that will sufficiently strengthen the resolve of identity-seeking adolescents to prompt them to sever valued ties with the positive and distinctive source of identity disidentified groups can represent?

The findings of the present investigation suggest a few possible approaches to at-risk students who identify strongly with at-risk groups.

The first option might be to find ways to avoid individuals' initial disidentifications. Avoiding initial disidentifications, however, involves extremely early intervention. If academic difficulties can lead to disidentification and at-risk status, at least one recent study would suggest that students may already be at risk in grade 1. It was found that students who struggled with reading and arithmetic in first grade were much more likely to

experience academic failure and leave high school without graduating than students who performed acceptably and well in the two core subjects (Simner & Barnes, 1991). Recent moves to more activity-centered learning and developmental report cards in elementary schools are attempts to address the issue of subjective early school failure. However, these programs have been in place for a number of years, and there has been no appreciable difference in student retention reported to the authors' knowledge. Either the programs' long-term benefits in this respect are questionable, or the return to traditional program delivery and progress evaluations during the senior-elementary and junior high school years neutralize the potential benefits of such programs and policies.

On their own, individually based interventions designed to avoid disidentification seem likely to flounder. Eventually, individual students, based purely on the natural process of social comparison, will determine their relative status in the academic hierarchy. The question then, is whether schools can find other ways of valuing potentially at-risk students and nurturing in them positive self-evaluations. Athletics are an example of one successful intervention schools are already engaged in. Students who are weak academically, but strong athletically, are given positive strokes and an abundance of affirmation in our traditional school settings. Research on minority students in the American school system found that those actively involved in interscholastic athletics enhanced their popularity and had lower dropout rates than control subjects (Melnick, Sabo & Vanfossen, 1992). Can the range of affirmable gifts and behaviors be exanded to include more of the typically at-risk students?

Alternatively, perhaps variations on the old vocational school model are worth considering -- settings in which the range of academic skill is sufficiently restricted that students who might not be affirmed in a traditional setting would be affirmed. The problem with this model, of course, is the stygma that is often attached to the vocational school. Restricted ranges of skills along particular dimensions might, nonetheless, increase the likelihood of a greater number of students experiencing a higher degree of status and relative achievement within their programs and their schools. Greater homogeneity of students within programs and schools might lessen the defensiveness of at-risk groups as they position themselves relative to a school's social diversity and status maps.

The segregated program and segregated school models might also be seen as an example of a second approach -- finding a way to enfranchise an entire disidentifed group at the same time. Confronted with a group of highly committed disidentified group members, finding a way to enfranchise the entire group might be the most promising, theoretically viable alternative. The difficulty is in determining how to execute such an intervention successfully. Concerted student activities efforts (e.g., special clubs and competitive teams), curricular alternatives (e.g., rock and roll guitar and drums courses, courses in weight training, household chemistry), and facility alterations (e.g., putting hang-outs like arcades, pool halls, etc. on the school premises) are all possible areas for consideration.

Also worth considering are approaches that attempt to get charismatic disidentified group leaders on side. Perhaps by enfranchising the leaders, one might successfully woo significant numbers of their followers.

Success in addressing the at-risk student problem(s) will undoubtedly lie in the judicious combination of individually-focused and group-focused interventions. Schools and communities are diverse in character, and the exact solutions that fit them best are sure to be as diverse as the schools and communities themselves. However, the research findings, general principles, and theories outlined here should serve other researchers and school administrators well as they consider their at-risk student intervention strategies.

Limitations of the Present Investigation & Areas for Future Study

The greatest limitation of the present investigation is its correlational, non-experimental nature. Although the correlational data is made more compelling by its close fit with the theory driving the research, it is still possible to argue that, for example, the higher level of self-esteem found among members of disidentified groups who feel closely connected with their groups than the rate of self-esteem found among members of disidentified groups who feel they do not belong with their group, is attributable, not to group belonging or connection, but to a third variable that is highly correlated with social success and happiness. Perhaps the happier disidentified students were happier to begin with, and did not become happier as a result of their disidentified group association. To rule out such explanations with absolute certainty, further research is required.

A longitudinal study of this sample is being planned. Longitudinal study of the present sample will have a number of advantages. The sample includes over 400 grade 9 students who can be followed throughout their high school years to determine whether differences between the grade 9 and grade 11 groups studied are cohort effects (the grade 9s are destreamed, whereas the grade 11 students were not) or developmental effects.

Explorations of gender differences developmentally also merit consideration. Another issue that merits investigation is determining, in a longitudinal framework, whether social skill is a prerequisite or an outcome of group belonging. Further, although Rosenberg's (1965) measure of global self-esteem is an excellent unidimensional measure, use of a multi-facetted measure in the future (e.g., Fleming & Courney, 1984; Rohan, 1996) may result in a more nuanced picture of the self-esteem components most affected by disidentification and social identity issues.

Two other research projects are planned as culminations to this program of research: (1) the development of a new predictive model for at-risk outcomes that can be used in assessing risk and the appropriateness of different kinds of intervention for different kinds of at-risk students; and (2) the design and testing of new intervention and curricular programs for serving socially connected at-risk members of disidentified groups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present investigation paints a compelling picture of the role social groupings and disidentification play in the at-risk student problem. Students who disidentify from their schools' norms and values seem to become at-risk students. At-risk students seem to either flounder socially, or connect meaningfully with disidentified groups. There is theoretical reason to believe that those that are socially lost can be reached by traditional at-risk student interventions. However, those who have made significant connections with disidentified groups and have built part of their identity on disidentified group membership, are likely to be extremely hard to reach in traditional ways because of the disidentified groups' coherent natures, homogeneity of membership, defensive orientation to the rest of

the social map, and significant likelihood of imposing sanctions on members who stray from group norms. To successfully intervene with disidentified group members who derive a sense of social identity from their disidentified group membership, only strategies that avoid initial disidentifications, or enfranchise large parts of the disidentified groups at the same time seem likely to hold much promise.

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Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction and Instructions:

Thank you for your willingness to complete this questionnaire. We hope that the results of our study will help people to better understand students and schools. Because our study may affect the way other psychologists and researchers approach their own research, and because the findings of our study may even affect the kinds of decisions school boards make about how to run schools, it is *very* important that your answers be as honest as possible.

This questionnaire is *completely confidential*. You have been given a blank questionnaire with only an identification number on it. This number is only there to help us make sure we put all the right information together. The study is about students *in general*, so your information will never be examined by itself. You may leave questions blank, or choose not to continue at any time. The researcher will guide you and your classmates through the questionnaire.

When you finish filling out the questionnaire, do not put your name on the it. ***Nobody outside of the research team will ever be able to match your name with your questionnaire, and nobody from your school is on the research team.*** The research team is made up entirely of three or four people from McGill University in Montreal. We hope this will make you feel more comfortable answering honestly.

Throughout the questionnaire, you will find questions that ask for three different kinds of responses. The first kind of question requires you to fill in a blank. Whenever you are answering this kind of question, you will know because a blank will be provided for you. These questions usually require a yes or no answer, or a number.

The second kind of question is multiple choice. When you answer multiple choice questions, simply circle the letter of the answer that fits your situation best. Sometimes the last option in a multiple choice question will be "other _____." If none of the other answers fits your situation, then circle the letter in front of this response, and write a short explanation in the blank.

Finally, the third kind of question requires you to answer on a scale. The scales will have nine points, with labels under the 1 and the 9. The labels will be opposites or extremes of some kind. Here's an example of what a scale might look like:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Disagree								Strongly Agree

When you see a scale like this, answer the question by circling the number that you feel is closest to the truth for you. For example, using the scale above, if you strongly agreed with a statement, you would circle the 9, if you didn't really have an opinion you would circle the 5, but if you were somewhere in between, you would circle a number in between the 5 and the 9.

Please answer honestly. We have tried to make the questions clear, but if anything seems confusing, or if you have any questions at all, just ask the researcher.

I.D.# _____

Grade: ____ School: _____

1. Please circle your gender. male female

2. How old are you? ____

3. What is the highest level of education that your mother has *completed*?

(a)	grade 7 or lower	(f)	grade 12
(b)	grade 8	(g)	grade 13 (OAC)
(c)	grade 9	(h)	at least 1 year of college or university
(d)	grade 10	(i)	college diploma or university degree
(e)	grade 11		

4. What is the highest level of education that your father has *completed*?

(a)	grade 7 or lower	(f)	grade 12
(b)	grade 8	(g)	grade 13 (OAC)
(c)	grade 9	(h)	at least 1 year of college or university
(d)	grade 10	(i)	college diploma or university degree
(e)	grade 11		

5. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree		Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree	

6. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree		Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree	

7. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree		Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree	

8. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

9. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

11. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

12. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

13. I certainly feel useless at times.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

14. At times I think I am no good at all.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree			Agree			Disagree		Strongly Disagree

15. How much do you enjoy school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate School				Neutral				Love School

16. What kind of grades do you get in school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Often Fail Courses								Always Over 80%

17. What was your average last term/semester? (approximately) _____

18. How well do you get along with your teachers?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Poorly								Very Well

19. How often do you get in trouble at school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Almost Never								Almost Every Day

20. Approximately how many detentions have you been given this year?

_____

21. Approximately how often have you been sent to the Vice Principal or Principal this year?

_____

22. On average, how many times a week do you skip a class?

_____

23. In general, do your closest friends get in more trouble, less trouble, or the same amount of trouble at school as you do?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Much Less				Same				Much More

24. Please indicate how important the following people are to you.

Your parents:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

Your teachers:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

Your friends:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

Your brothers and/or sisters:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

25. Please indicate how important it is to you to impress the following people.

Your parents:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

Your teachers:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

Your friends:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

Your brothers and/or sisters:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Important								Extremely Important

26. Using the following two scales, indicate how you generally find your school work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Too Easy								Too Difficult

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Boring								Very Interesting

27. Using the following five scales, indicate how much you enjoy the following subjects at school.

Math & Science:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate the Subjects								Love the Subjects

English & History:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate the Subjects								Love the Subjects

Physical Education:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate the Subject								Love the Subject

Music:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate the Subject								Love the Subject

Technical Studies:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate the Subject								Love the Subject

28. Were you raised in a religious home (e.g., your family attended church, and/or your parents taught you about religion, etc.)? How religious was your family?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all Religious								Very Religious

Does your family belong to a particular religion? If so, what religion?

(a) Catholic
(b) Protestant (e.g., Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, etc.)
(c) Hindu
(d) Buddhist
(e) Islamic
(f) Jewish
(g) other _____

29. How religious do you consider yourself to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all Religious								Very Religious

Do you belong to a particular religion? If so, what religion?

(a) Catholic
(b) Protestant (e.g., Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, etc.)
(c) Hindu
(d) Buddhist
(e) Islamic
(f) Jewish
(g) other _____

30. While you were growing up, how would you describe your family's financial situation?

(a) My family was pretty poor.
(b) My family was lower-middle class.
(c) My family was middle class.
(d) My family was upper-middle class.
(e) My family was pretty wealthy.
(f) other _____

31. Please circle the racial category you think describes you best.

(a) Black (c) White (e) other _____
(b) Asian (d) Native

32. Were you born in North America? (a) yes (b) no

33. Were your parents born in North America?

(a) yes, both were (c) only my father was
(b) no, neither were (d) only my mother was

The last question in this part of the questionnaire is on the next page.

35. In almost every place, there are a number of social groups -- groups of people that you can identify as hanging out or belonging together. Most of the time, you can identify people as members of particular social groups. For example, in a high school some of the social groups might be the "hippies," the "jocks," the "rockers," etc. These groups are often not very formal. However, sometimes social groups grow out of activities, clubs or work (e.g., "jocks" or "student council"). Some social groups are also called "cliques." But usually "clique" refers to a small group of friends within a larger social group. We are looking for the large, well-known social groups at your school, not the small friendship cliques.

Think about *your* school . What social groups can you think of? Please list below as many of these groups as you can. In many places, groups have special names that outsiders might not know. Use the names that you and the other students know the groups by. Don't forget to include the group(s) you belong to.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Look at the list of groups you just made. Do you belong to any of these groups? If so, put check marks beside the groups you belong to. Some people don't really hang out in social groups at school, and that can be normal too. If you don't identify with a social group at your school, write "no group at school" in the last space provided above.

Now, look at the groups *you put check marks beside*. Which group do you identify with most? Put a star (*) beside the group you identify with most. If you don't identify with a social group at your school, put a star beside the last space.

More Instructions:

For the next several pages, we would like you to answer some questions about the social groups you just identified. The next few pages will ask you questions about the social group at school that you identify with most (the one you put a star beside). Write the name of the group in the space below, and continue. If you don't identify with a social group at school, just follow through this part with the rest of the class. Don't turn ahead. On page 16, the researcher will ask you to continue.

_____(Your Group)

From now on, for this questionnaire, whatever group you are describing will be called your "social group."

1. How much do you like your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Little								Very Much

2. How long have you hung out with this social group? _____

3. About how many students are there in your school in your social group?

_____

4. Do you consider yourself to be one of the leaders of your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Definitely Yes								Definitely No

5. How much do you feel you belong in your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Don't Belong								Definitely Belong

6. How different do you think your social group is from the other social groups in your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Similar								Very Different

7. How often do *other members* of your social group hang out with members of other social groups?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								Always

8. How often do *you* hang out with members of other social groups?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								Always

9. How popular do you think you are in your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Very Popular				Average				Very Popular

10. Most social groups have expectations about how group members should behave -- what they should do, who they should hang out with, how they should talk, what music they should listen to, etc. If a person in your social group doesn't do what the rest of the group expects, how likely is it that he/she will be given a hard time by the rest of the group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Unlikely								Very Likely

11. Where does your group stand on some of the behaviors listed below? To what extent is your group associated with the following behaviors? Use the scales to describe your group on the following dimensions.

Smoking:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Doing drugs:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Playing sports:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Giving teachers and school administrators a hard time:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Partying a lot:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Being involved in school activities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

A lot of sexual activity:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Getting good marks in school:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Breaking school rules:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

12. How central is your social group to your life? In other words, how much does your social group affect your day to day life?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Little								Very Much

13. How easy would it be for you to join a different social group at your school if you wanted to?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Easy								Very Difficult

14. How interested would you be in joining a different social group at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all Interested								Very Interested

15. What group besides your own would you be most interested in being a member of?

_____

16. How do you think the students outside your social group see your group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negatively								Very Positively

17. How much do you think the average student in your school would like to be a member of your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at All								Very Much

18. How difficult is it for somebody to be accepted into your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Easy								Very Difficult

19. Compared to all the other social groups in your school, how high do you think your social group's status is in the opinion of other students?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Lowest Status								Highest Status

20. How do you think the school's teachers and administration (vice-principals, principal, etc.) see your social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negatively								Very Positively

21. Compared to all the other student social groups, how high do you think your social group's status is in the opinion of the school's staff and administration?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Lowest Status								Highest Status

22. How do members of your social group generally feel about the school's staff and administration?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negatively								Very Positively

23. Do you think members of your social group generally get along with teachers and administrators better or worse than the average student at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Much Worse				About the Same				Much Better

24. Below is a list of characteristics of people. Please indicate to what degree the members of your social group are the same as one another, or different from one another, on these characteristics.

Races of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

Religions of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

Attitudes of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

Values of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

The way group members dress:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

The way group members act:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

The kind of music group members listen to:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

25. When you're just hanging out with members of your group, how often does *the group* talk about what sets your group apart from the rest of the groups in the school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

26. How often do *you* compare your social group to other social groups at school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

27. How often do you think you, personally, are discriminated against by members of other social groups at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

28. How often do you think your social group, as a whole, is discriminated against by other social groups at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

29. How often do you think you, personally, are discriminated against by teachers and administrators at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

30. How often do you think your social group, as a whole, is discriminated against by teachers and administrators at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

31. What social groups (up to three) do members of your social group make fun of the most? Please list them in order -- the group your group makes most fun of first, and so on. If members of your social group never make fun of other social groups, then leave these spaces blank.

_____

_____

_____

Last Instructions:

This last part of the questionnaire is a lot like the part you just completed. The difference is that, instead of answering the questions about *your own* social group, you will be answering the questions about *a social group you do not belong to*. If you refer back to the list you made on page 9, find the first group you mentioned *that you do not belong to*. Write the name of that group in the space below and continue. Congratulations, you're in the home stretch!

_____(Not one you belong to.)

For the rest of the questionnaire, "this group," or "this social group" refers to the group you have named above.

1. How much do you like this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Little								Very Much

2. Have you ever been a part of this social group?

(a) yes (b) no

3. How much would you like to be a part of this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Little								Very Much

4. How different do you think this social group is from the other social groups in your school (not including your social group)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Similar								Very Different

5. How often do members of this social group hang out with members of *other* social groups?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								Always

6. How often do members of this social group hang out with members of *your* social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								Always

7. Most social groups have expectations about how group members should behave -- what they should do, who they should hang out with, how they should talk, what kind of music they should listen to, etc. If a person in this social group doesn't do what the rest of the group expects, how likely is it that he/she will be given a hard time by the rest of the group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Unlikely								Very Likely

8. Where does this group stand on some of the behaviors listed below? To what extent is this group associated with the following behaviors? Use the scales to describe this group on the following dimensions.

Smoking:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Doing drugs:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Playing sports:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Giving teachers and school administrators a hard time:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Partying a lot:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Being involved in school activities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

A lot of sexual activity:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Getting good marks in school:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

Breaking school rules:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Associated								Definitely Associated

9. How central is this social group to the lives of its members? In other words, how much does this social group affects its members' data to day lives?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Little								Very Much

10. How easy would it be for members of this group to join a different social group if they wanted to?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Easy								Very Difficult

11. How do you think the students outside this social group generally see this group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negatively								Very Positively

12. How much do you think the average student at your school would like to be a member of this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at All								Very Much

13. How difficult is it for somebody to be accepted into this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Easy								Very Difficult

14. Compared to all the other social groups in your school, how high do you think this social group's status is in the opinion of other students?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Lowest Status								Highest Status

15. How do you think the school's teachers and administration (Vice Principals, Principals, etc.) see this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negatively								Very Positively

16. Compared to all the other student social groups, how high do you think this social group's status is in the opinion of the school's staff and administration?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Lowest Status								Highest Status

17. How do members of this social group generally feel about the school's staff and administration?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negatively								Very Positively

18. Do you think members of this social group generally get along with teachers and administrators better or worse than the average student at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Much Worse				About the Same				Much Better

19. Below is a list of characteristics of people. Please indicate to what degree the members of this social group are the same as one another, or different from one another, on these characteristics.

Races of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

Religions of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

Attitudes of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

Values of group members:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

The way group members dress:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

The way group members act:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

The kind of music group members listen to:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All the Same								All Different

20. How similar is this social group to the social group you belong to?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Different								Very Similar

21. How often do you compare your social group to this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

22. How often do members of your social group make fun of this social group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

23. How often do you think this social group, as a whole, is discriminated against by other social groups at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

26. How often do you think this social group, as a whole, is discriminated against by teachers and administrators at your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never								All the Time

Taken all together, how would you say things are these days -- would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not happy?

Very Happy	Pretty Happy	Not Too Happy
1	2	3

Appendix B

Composite Variables

Note: Below, variables modified by 'rs' are reverse scored.

Group Disidentification	-	part 2 #30 + rs part 2 #20 + rs part 2 #21 + rs part 2 #22
Group Homogeneity	-	part 2 #24 (a) through part 2 #24 (g) summed [low numbers = high homogeneity]
Individual/Group Identification	-	part 2 #1 + part 2 #5 + rs part 2 #4
Association with Disidentified Behaviors	-	part 2 #11(a) + (b) + (d) + (e) + (I) + rs(part 2 #11(c) + (f) + (h)
Group Closure	-	part 2 #10 + part 2 #18
Individual/School Disidentification	-	part 1 #15 + part 1 #18 + part 1 #26(b) + part 1 #27(a) + part 1 #27(b) + rs(part 1 #19 + part 1 #26(a) + part 1 #29) [low numbers = high disidentification]
Perception of Groups by School Establishment	-	part 2 #20 + part 2 #21

Median Split Variables Computed on:

Group Disidentification

Individual/Group Connection

Individual/School Disidentification

Author Notes

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Table 1

Participants as a Function of Gender and Grade Level

	Grade Level				
Gender	9	10	11	12	OAC
Male	222	17	88	7	2
Female	202	10	85	6	2

Table 2

How Different Social Groups See Themselves

	Dependent Variables			
Group	Disidentification	Association with Disidentified Behaviors	School's Perceptions of the Group	Students' Perceptions of the Group
Whole Sample (n = 644)	17.78	40.627	11.168	15.882
Bangers (n = 50)	25.61	58.69	7.10	15.76
Druggies (n = 16)	25.75	65.94	6.50	15.53
Hippies (n =12)	23.58	57.75	8.08	17.00
Brains (n = 14)	8.36	20.71	16.21	14.00
Jocks (n =38)	14.80	40.16	13.44	19.35
Preps (n = 12)	10.08	25.92	15.25	19.00
"Friends" (n = 276)	15.44	33.79	12.31	15.09

Table 3

How Non-Group Members Perceive the Social Groups

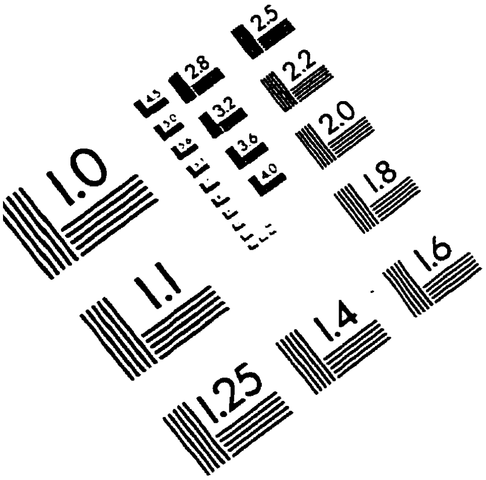
	Dependent Variables			
GROUP	Perceived Disidentificat.	Perceived Association with Disidentified Behaviors	How the School Sees the Group	How Other Students See the Group
Bangers (n = 63)	26.48	59.97	5.83	15.76
Druggies (n = 40)	30.65	63.10	3.68	10.05
Hippies (n = 40)	21.46	52.73	8.50	13.75
Brains (n = 23)	9.05	19.04	9.52	7.61
Jocks (n = 51)	15.75	35.43	11.12	18.49
Preps (n = 19)	9.78	22.21	14.74	12.78

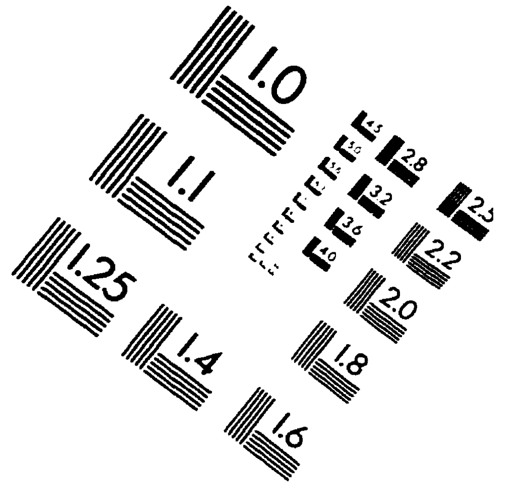
Table 4

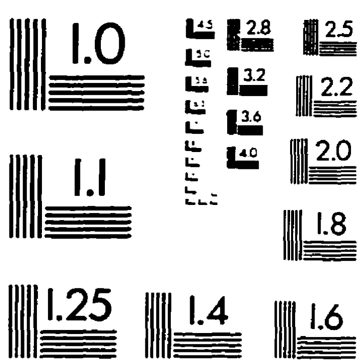
Participants as a Function of Individual Disidentification from the School Establishment and Membership in Groups that are Disidentified from the School Establishment

	Group Disidentification	
Individual Disidentification	High	Low
High	207	107
Low	67	201

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)







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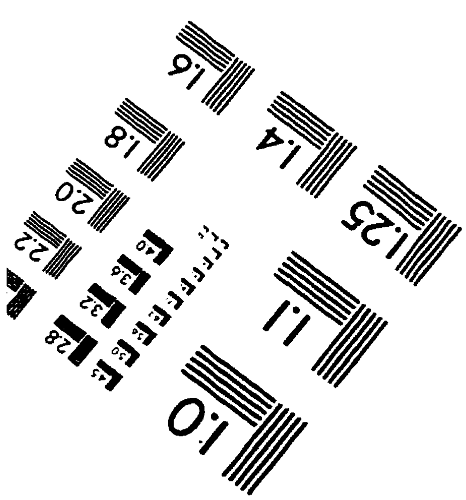

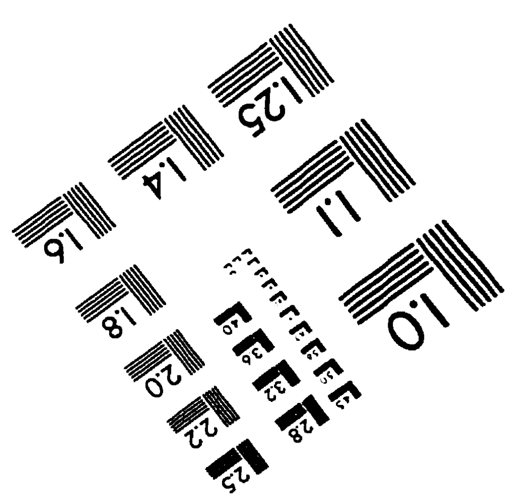

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