The purpose of this essay is to examine the kind of relationship that exists between identity and environment. A great amount of thought and theory has been focused on the concept of self and context. This essay attempts to apply various examples of social theory in random, face-to-face interactions.

To observe a phenomenon physical parameters must be established. Modern researchers define circumscribed observation as the sample population. Research in a modern urban environment, poses numerous criteria to establish a sample, its size, and physical nature. Jack Gibbs, in his article "Methods and Problems in Delimitation of Urban Units", cites that cities by their nature are comprised of both politically and physically bounded regions (1961:57). Patterns of settlement and social behavior differ within and outside these regions. Physically, a certain patterning of settlement exists. Streets demarcate travel from one urban area to the next and provide a system along which, human residence can be organized.

The researcher, approaching a multiplexed urban environment may incorporate what Gibbs terms "landmark identifiers" to define the city and the sample population within it (1961:58). Lines and points of demarcation and identification may be physically, politically, administratively or socially recognized. The nature of each identifier, and its perceived worth as a marker, will affect not only the units size but its overall purpose for those who reside within it.

Census tracts and zip code areas represent administratively demarcated residential units (Gibbs 1961:62). Administrative territories, such as zip code regions, can and generally are composed of politically, physically and socially perceived sub-units. One young African-American male questioned in this survey described his residential unit as a "ghetto" a shared socio-economic status. An elderly African-American female, living not more than a mile away from the first subject, described her environment as "the eighteen-hundred block" a physical region, sharing a common location. These are just two examples of the numerous perceptions residents of a shared urban setting can take.

Demographic patterns within administrative territories are visible through the examination of statistical and census data that urban bureaucracies readily compile and manipulate. Gibbs points out that information derived from such resources represent "indirect examination" of social trends caused by "facts of delimitation"(1961:66). A fact of delimitation does not always have to be physical; population density, expressed in percentage can also represent a limit mark (Gibbs 1961:68).

Research that combines and examines the roles and effects of administrative, physical and demographic boundaries, incorporating direct and indirect census material, should provide a balanced overview of the individual and the environment.

**Background**

Area 67214, as an administrative unit, has clear landmark identifiers. It is bounded in the east by Hillside Avenue, running north-south. In the west by Broadway Avenue, parallel to Hillside. Its northern extent is traversed by 21st Street, running east-west, while its southern extent is Douglas Avenue. The entire unit encompasses a thirty-one square mile area. CACI recorded, that just over 18,000 people live in the zip code, representing over 4,000 families (CACI 1995:111-A).

Area 67214 is racially comprised of twenty-six percent white, sixty-four percent Black, four percent Asian, and eight percent Hispanic (CACI 1995:111-B). Over forty-eight percent of 67214's residents earn below 15,000 dollars a year (the 1994 federal poverty level is 14,000 dollars income per year for a four person household (Adam 1994:abstract)) (CACI 1995:111-C). The average household size for 67214 is three persons (CACI 1995:111-A). Social and economic characteristics of urban units like 67214 provide the researcher with a ground work for the direct perceptions he or she may encounter inside and outside of the administrative unit. They also provide a stimulus for an inaccurate image of the spacial environment 67214 encompasses; what J.
Douglas Porteous, in his book *Environment and Behavior*, terms the urban "mental map" (1977:138). This mental map can be manipulated by both the researcher and subject. The concern of this essay is the relationship that exists between the environment, perception, and identity. An understanding of their interrelation has been the impetus for a great degree of recent social theory and explanation.

Thomas Fitzgerald, in his book *Metaphors of Identity*, defines identity as "self-in-context", as such identity is intimately connected to context. Context represents the environments which self, both physical and non-physical, inhabit. Environment, as a result, cannot be isolated from the identity of its occupant. Action and behavior, of a social nature, as derived from self, affects this environment. Verbal and Physical expressions of identity, self in context, represent the culmination of environment and ones place in that environment. Self cannot be viewed as a unilineal, constant stream of human thought. It is composed of numerous variables of human existence. *The Sense of Self: Research and Theory*, authored by Alan O. Ross, divides self into at least two existent halves. One half, the subject self, is represented by concept of "I" (1992:5). This expression of "I" generally is concerned with the individual, separated from his or her surroundings; their self awareness. Occupants of 67214, included by the survey, were questioned as to how they would identify themselves. Ideally, responses provided were representative of perception, unique to that individual. Ross points out that this "I" is counterbalanced by a second half of self, a "me" or object self (1992:5). As an object or categorical self, the "me" must focus on relation, specifically, relation to others, and to ones environment. Personal attributes like gender, age, role and status dominate the orientation of this categorical perspective. Unlike Ross, Fitzgerald views the individual as separate from the object self, using the metaphor "mirror" (1993:50). This paper's intent focuses on Ross's object self as a reflection of subject self in environment. Verbal responses, pertaining to self must be viewed as highly influenced by all characteristics present during the speech event. Elaine Chaika, in *Language: The Social Mirror*, points out that semantics in linguistic expression encompasses perception of the speaker, and the context in which the expression occurs (1982:69). The resulting form of audible response, thus represents the median or common ground established by converging perceptions, attitudes, values and context. Chaika terms this the resulting speech genre (1982:70).

**Method**

The data incorporated by this paper is part of a random community survey involving ten, face to face interviews. A questionnaire was followed during the entirety of each interaction. Interviews began with a short description of, who the interviewers were and the purpose of the survey. Only a very generalized synopsis of the research purpose was used as part of this description. Questions were designed to be short, open-ended, and unbiasing. Survey questions were designed with the understanding that, even on a modular level, organism, behavior, and environment are intertwined (Porteous 1977:133). Human interactions are a composite of all three models. It was for this reason, that gesture, verbal tone, response and place were all observed during the interview. This study's indirect data came from demographic statistics compiled for 67214 zip code residents. This data represented only a fraction of material provided by the *CACI Sourcebook of Zip Code Demographics (CACI)*. CACI marketing systems researched topics pertaining to economic behaviors within each administrative unit. Trends in household size, personal and household income, and purchasing power were combined with general census conclusions. Multiple resources were cross referenced by the CACI when deciphering these statistics. Income, for instance was the result of data acquired from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the National Planning Association Data Service (CACI 1995:ii).

**Results**

Six out of the ten individuals interviewed, residing in 67214, when asked what one word they would use to identify themselves, chose a positive adjective. Three of the six used the word "great": an elderly Hispanic women, visibly in her late sixties; an African-American male, at or around the age of sixteen; and an elderly African-American female. In each instance, similar gesticulation, verbal tones, and facial expression accompanied the response. Arms were crossed, heads raised, and little or no eye contact was given. In two of
these instances, both involving elderly residents, bodily swaying accompanied the event. This particular phenomenon exemplifies, what Chaika points out as a means by which, the respondent conveys information and action with response (1982:71). "Great" and other positive terms expressed may have been directed, not as much to the question but, to the interviewer(s). Words, such as "Great" and "Very Good" may have acted more as symbolic markers of life satisfaction, discussed later, and satisfaction with place than as identifiers of object self. These first responses to identity, generally reflect an initial reaction of the respondent to the inquiry and inquirer. Responses to the second and third questions however, became the representatives of self in context. In these secondary responses, six of the ten interviewees stand out. Among the six subjects, three pair emerge as unique.

Pair One

Thomas Weyr, author of *Hispanic U.S.A.: Breaking the Melting Pot*, views the Hispanic-American population as divided into two groups (1988:1). The first half is comprised of those who wish to assimilate into the American culture while remaining separate. Members of such a group would include individuals who wish to be perceived as American citizens yet, remain physically separate from mainstream culture and community. A second group, within the Hispanic-American complex, seems to strive for a mainstream American existence yet, preserve a highly visible ethnicity and distinctiveness. Members of this grouping would not cluster their settlement patterning but, would be spread throughout numerous American communities living as Hispanics. The two "Hispanic-Americans" included in this survey seem to demonstrate a reversed perception to Weyr's groupings. This turn about may not be due to Weyr being wrong in his hypothesis, rather they may be the result of age, place, and associated stress. The first subject was a "Hispanic-American" female at or around the age of twelve. Her family, who she resided with, consisted of a male sibling, two parents and a grandfather. Their house was located in the extreme northwest portion of the 67214 zip code, at or around the intersection of 19th Street and Broadway. She identified herself as "I'm Mexican" with little or no hesitation. Her house was located in "a neighborhood", "a place where one lives", and was surrounded by friends of the family. This young Mexican girl's grandfather acted as her primary care giver while her parents were at work. If a situation arose which called for help outside of her grandfather and his ability to resolve it, then, she explained while pointing to a nearby home, her nearest neighbors would be notified. The second subject was an elderly Hispanic-American female. She lived alone at or around the intersection of Douglas and Ohio, located in the southwestern portion of the 67214 zip code district. Her home was visibly isolated from its surroundings. This residential unit was located in the midst of a highly industrial and commercial area. Her little white house stood in contrast to its environment. She identified herself as (one whom) "attempts", and described her neighborhood as "not much" (of one). To her the "neighborhood" was almost a forgotten term, due to the fact that the people who used to comprise it were no longer there. Presently, there was only one individual which she knew lived nearby, but her knowledge of them was the result of random greetings. Her home was filled with a large number of small objects and pictures, generally religious in nature. The majority of the secular photos were of her family, those both deceased and living. Central to these photos was a portrait of her and her husband; now deceased. In times of trouble her sister would be the first person she would notify. Her sister lived "only" a few miles away. There is a conscious choice of identity occurring in the response of each subject. The youth identifies herself with her ethnicity, while the aged Hispanic-American identifies with personal strife. This may allude to the divisions within the Hispanic-American culture pointed out by Thomas Weyr. Residence seems to best express the presence of a different perception of place. The elderly subject chose a desegregated residence while the Mexican youth lived, and derived a certain security from a neighborhood of residents sharing her ethnicity. In his book, *The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America*, Ilan Stavans cumulatively identifies the Hispanic-American culture as a culture of co-existence with those subjugating it (1995:157). Stavans perceives Hispanic-Americans as comprising "a culture of adaptation, of survival, of change which welds the people together"(1995:157). Continuous oppression as well a historical trend of American nationalism seems to have united a number of ethnic groups. Within these ethnic identities divisions or what Stavans terms, "sub-cultures" have formed (1995:156). Three
divisions seem to be occurring within the Hispanic-American cultural complex. The first incorporates those who wish to assimilate into the American mainstream culture. A second, is a transitional group "living in the hyphen" (Stavans 1995:156). Third, there are Mexicanos clearly perceiving themselves as Mexican. The first subject, identified herself as "Mexican". Based upon Stavans hypothesis, this places her into a sub-culture of Hispanic-America perceiving itself as Mexican, first. It demonstrates a strong sense of ethnicity within a larger mainstream culture. The young Mexican girl was bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish. As the interviewers approached the residence, she was speaking in Spanish to her grandfather. Upon contact with the interviewer, her mannerisms, vocal intonations and language changed. She answered questions following rules of mainstream American linguistic custom. Verbal stressors, and tonalities accompanied her speech with little or no Mexican dialect. This linguistic turn-about, may allude to the presence of a social duality existing within the pre-teen female. Ethnically, she was clearly Mexican. Her Mexican traits were those which she identified most closely with. The phenotypic, linguistic and social qualities she perceives as Mexican, comprise her subject and object self. It is when she is forced into interactions with the dominant American culture that her social (what Chaika previously terms) "actions with words" change, becoming "American" in nature. Her object- self remains Mexican, and is identified as such, while her subject self becomes an expressive characteristic of the mainstream American cultural complex. This manipulation in words of action may represent a symbolic movement out of a Mexican self-in-context to an American mainstream contextual expression. Clearly, she had no hesitation in identifying herself as Mexican and, as such, having the right to exist within American culture.

Stavens cites the work of Martin Ramirez and his book Hunger of Memory in which, Ramirez addresses this young Mexican's duality as creating an "abyss" between the Latino culture and those which surround it (1995:158). This separation can become a force perpetuating isolation. Ramirez points out that the perception of ethnicity and its affects differ within each culture and sub-culture (Stavans, 1995:158). Hispanic-Americans view the repercussions of cultural isolation with differing opinion. It is for this reason that Stavans recognized divisions within the Hispanic-American culture. The strongest lines of division, for the expression of ethnicity, seem to be those dividing generations. The Hispanic elderly recognize ethnic identity as a further limitation, while the youth view it as a security (Stavans 1995:158). What Stavans terms an existence "of two hearts" appears (1995:168). Those individuals obsessed with cultural satisfaction and empowerment divide from others who are "traumatized" by the distinction and haunted by the "painful unresolved past" (Stavans 1995:168). Hispanic youth seem to strive for membership within their ethnic group. These youth, representative of the first Hispanic-American surveyed, are not alone in their desire for Hispanic membership. In recent decades, there has been an intensive influx of non-traditional Hispanic descendants. Stavans refers specifically to the recent boost in Cuban membership to those comprising Hispanic-America as an example (1995:162). This trend may be a result of the romanticization of Hispanics and their heritage by the media and much of academia. The perception of a glorious, pristine existence seems to have been born out of the trends of cultural awareness in the 1960's (Stavans 1995:161). In the 1990's, this cultural awareness has become codified as part of the movement termed Multiculturalism. Differences in reaction to this awareness, exist between two Hispanic subjects included by this survey. A difference in context may explain this. Researchers with the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCA) have found that, for all ethnic groups, advances in age require a virtually continuous re-adjustment to change outside and inside self (1988:11). This readjustment becomes hazardous and two fold for members of ethnic minorities. Ethnicity, along with age provide reasons for prejudice and discrimination. Inadequacies in income, education, employment, and health can contribute to the degree of ethnic racism aged members of minorities confront (NHCA 1988:12). Self-worth and self-esteem become directly affected by these stresses. Self, for the ethnic elderly, is impinged upon by stresses resulting from their compound existence and their environment. The NHCA views self-worth and self-esteem as closely associated to the success of an individuals standards and values through their capability to perform within the context of the stress (1988:12). In the Hispanic-American culture, ethnicity and its expression have become a strong, socially defining force (NHCA 1988:13). Concepts of social structure, role, place and self have all been well defined by Hispanic tradition. Roles of gender have been most strongly affected. Roles related to the Mexican family are similar to those expressed by the larger Hispanic family structure (NHCA 1988:13). Therefore, the Mexican family can be viewed as a subset of a larger Hispanic expression. The NHCA found
that extreme patriarchy was a characteristic of this family structure (1988:13). In recent times the patriarchy has weakened and, to a great extent, has been replaced by increasing gender sharedness within the family. Elderly Hispanics, such as the second subject examined here, find themselves caught in changing roles of gender. Evolution within these social structures can create stress for individuals experiencing it. The aged Hispanic-American's home, contained pictorial representations of her young relations, all peripheral to a portrait of her and her deceased husband. The sharedness of marital responsibility which many of her relatives and offspring may experience provides ample care for her youngest relation. This fact may decrease her role in their upbringing, a role which her mother may have fulfilled as her and her sister's offspring matured. Her isolated lifestyle, a residence far away from her relatives, and the skeletal nature of her neighborhood may have resulted in a change of role and identity for this woman. Duties which the first subjects grandfather has, as a secondary caregiver, may not be necessary or available to the second subject. Stress resulting from social change in this manner, may severely affect her self-esteem and self-worth. Her identification as "attempts" are probable indications of just such stress. The roles assumed by her mother and grandmother as they became elders, provided them with a degree of familial worth no longer present for the second subject. Culture has been shown to influence perceptions of life satisfaction. Ethnicity and the successful fulfillment of related roles seem to affect the level of this satisfaction (Reed-Sanders et al. 1988:52). Within the Hispanic-American complex, role and its reflection of worth is an important factor as to how an individual may perceive overall life success.

Delores Reed-Sanders, Robert Wrinkle and Hermita Anzaldua in their article "Life Satisfaction Among the Hispanic Elderly", surveyed three hundred, forty-seven aged Hispanics. Of their sample population, over sixty-eight percent were female, of this percentage, over sixty-five percent lived alone (Reed-Sanders 1988:53). A primary variable examined by this correlative analysis was the concept of self "Mastery". Mastery was defined by Reed-Sanders as the "extent to which life chances" seem to be "under ones control" (1988:60). This concept of mastery is, by definition, is an integral part of life satisfaction. Those respondents more socially empowered than others felt a greater sense of mastery and control over life stress. Hermita Anzaldua, Delores Reed-Sanders, Robert Wrinkle, and Guadalupe Gibson in "Coping Styles of Mexican-American Elderly", found that those which were assimilated, to a higher degree, into the dominant culture were better able to cope with environmental stresses outside the support provided by familial or communal ties (1988:97). This ability or inability to cope well within the dominant culture may explain the difference in role expressed in the first subjects grandfather and subject two. The first subject's grandfather may be monolingual and more dependent on those individuals which his granddaughter may depend upon in times of trouble. The second subject on the other hand, lives alone and may have been forced to adapt to her changing environment as well as the changing concept of family within Hispanic-America. Her husband passed away. Their portrait remained central to all others in her home. Within the picture, he stood above and behind her; she was seated. The towering nature of his familial status to her own and, the idealized security associated with it were gone. This may provide a second reason for her metaphor of identity "attempts".

Support groups do exist for the aged. They seem to be categorized into two types. An informal or community organization, and a formal or agency group (NHCA 1988:15). Ethnic aged, especially those of African-American and Hispanic-American membership, look positively upon the use of community organization to cope with high levels of stress. Coping with stress not by group but, through self, is the ideal for the ethnic aged. Delores Reed-Sanders et al., term this reliance on self as the usage of a "cognitive map"(1988:51). The success of this cognitive map reinforces what Reed-Sanders terms "life satisfaction"(1988:51). Cultural factors have been shown to influence the perception of life satisfaction. Ethnicity and the successful fulfillment of related roles seem to affect the level of satisfaction (Reed 1988:52).

**Pair Two**

The role of context as a component of self-in-context, or identity may be better illustrated by a second pair of interviewees. This pair share common traits of cultural membership, gender, and age. They exist as members of an ethnic minority encapsulated by a mainstream culture. The first subject was an African-American male at or around the age of sixteen. He lived with his mother and a younger sibling near the intersection of 16th
Street and Kansas. This places him in the north central portion of the 67214 zip code district. The first subject identified himself as "black". He lived in a particular urban environment which he termed, "ghetto", "that's where it's at". Individuals familiar to him, within this environment, were predominantly of the same age. In times of trouble the subject would turn to his father. His father lived outside the community in Kansas City. The perceptions of the first subject represent those of an individual perceiving membership in an ethnic group and, as such, sharing a geographic and economic environment. The second subject's residence was located three city blocks northwest of the first. He was similar in age, ethnicity and locality. When the interviewer approached him he was cleaning a car which was proudly proclaimed as his own. During the inquiry, his father and a younger sister moved to the doorway, just behind the subject. When they became visible, the second subject turned and assured them that he was "all right" and was merely being asked a few simple questions. The African-American youth described himself as "goofy", and his "neighborhood" as "rough, sometimes" but, generally "O.K.". The neighbors he identified to the interviewer, contrasted those identified by the first subject. Residents, known to him, were older than he was. He vocalized these examples by prefixing them with either, "mister" or "misses". In times of trouble, the subject would turn to his neighbors if his family was not first able to help.

William Julius Wilson, in his article "The Underclass: Issues Perspectives and Public Policy", perceives the "ghetto as a modern urban reality (1989:183). The ghetto represents a pocketed isolate within a larger American cultural complex. Attributes, stereotyped with residence in a ghetto setting, seem to be perpetuated by its social isolation (1989:183). Physical boundaries, in the form of administrative categorization and economic limitation, seem to perpetuate occupancy and membership along with the attributes stereotyped to its inhabitants. Ghetto residents become severely separated from the mainstream culture around them, reinforcing this delimitation of place and membership (1989:183). Wilson proposes that, with such perpetual isolation from the larger whole, reservation-like affects can occur (1989:183). Deficiencies in opportunity and subsequent inability add to the depleting nature of the ghetto. Concepts of who one is, in relation to place, become permanent; an ethnic identity. Ethnicity, as perceived by the National Hispanic Council on Aging, is determined by the country of origin and the length of residence in and out of that location (1988:13). This definition can be applied in the same way to residence in the "ghetto". Occupation within this urban unit can create and justify an native identity. This identity, if allowed to exist long enough, can evolve to the point that it becomes an ethnicity. Writers, such as Bernard Makhosweze Magubane, disagreed with the perception taken by scholars that a "ghetto" ethnicity evolved as a reaction to place. For Magubane, in his book The Ties That Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa, ghetto ethnicity is part of a larger, historical, socialized concept of inferiority (1987:44).

African-America has always been a subjugated portion of the larger, mainstream culture (Magubane 1987:44). Magubane believes that with colonial slavery, a "culture of control" and of the controlled was founded (1987:45). The persistence of this historic subordination and superordination seems embodied by the socially isolated and accompanying underclass status of perception which is shared by many "blacks" (Magubane 1987:45). The ghetto and its alienation may represent the modern prodigy of this historic process. The perception of the first subject, pertaining to his place in society, demonstrates a view better explained by Wilson than Magubane. For this young man, the ghetto is a reality, or context in which he exists. His existence within the ghetto, in combination with those around him, help to define a sharedness as a reality of place, "where its at". The ghetto becomes an ethnicity of space more than race, inhabited by an underclass or sub-culture of non-opportunity a micro economy inside a macro economy (Wilson 1989:185). Existence in an environment of non-opportunity, if perpetuated long enough, can create cultural traits for those inside.

Alienation can represent a trait of social isolation. In their book Race, Class and Culture: A Study in Afro-American Mass Opinion, Robert Smith and Richard Seltzer, point out that perceived alienation, among the public opinion of Afro-Americans seems to be predominantly expressed by urban black youth and, single women (1992:89). The first subject along with his mother fall into the category established by Sanders and Seltzer. Their feelings of separateness may be stronger than others who share the same context. Distinctions as strong as class may provide a further degree of alienation. If shared, perceived alienation resembling those of this young black male and his mother may lead to class distinctions among an isolated "ghetto" underclass. Alienation can thus, be viewed as a recognition of distinction. The first subject's self, and self-in-context, were
specific and representational. His alienation and that shared by his mother, who sent him to the door upon the arrival of the interviewer, became characteristic of his subject self. The second interviewee, on the other hand, clearly did not have the same perceived alienation. Members of his family were present, and clearly acted in concern for the subject. Great concern was given to daily activity. Alienation felt by this second youth may not have been as strong as those of the first subject, and for this reason, distinctiveness was not strongly expressed.

Pierre Bourdieu, in *Language and Symbolic Power*, recognizes a concept he terms "linguistic ethnicity"(1991:220). Linguistic ethnicity and its relation to identity can best explain metaphors like "black", a metaphor used by the first subject. Linguistic ethnicities are objects of mental representations (1991:220). These objects of representation are composed of the values of cognition, personal investment and user interest (Bourdieu 1991:220). Mental representations of oneself, unless purposely made secret, are shared with individuals outside self. The way in which representation is expressed to others becomes an integral goal of identity and subsequently ethnicity. Extremes, or socially perceived types, may be manipulated in order to convey a particular image of self. Extreme expressions allow the formation of almost spontaneous perceptions representational of the speaker.

Region, identity and ethnicity of place, as viewed by Bourdieu, require the inclusion of traits of origin and location (1991:221). Linguistic labels incorporated by this process are comparable to symbolic representations of self-in-context. These symbols, need not be physically real, as much as, icons for a perceived reality. The first subject's identity as "black", in the manner it is presented to the interviewer, along with further responses, associates its meaning, not with a reality of phenotype but with a perceived reality of self-in-context and sharedness. Linguistic expression is then manipulated in a way that awakens associations and concerns within the mind of "the other"; in this case the listener. In the same manner, ethnic identifiers, and what Bourdieu terms linguist "fines", demarcate the existence and sharedness of place, division, and ethnicity (1991:221). Responses, which include expressions of neighborhood, block, and side each represent the specific use of linguistic fines to demarcate the extent, size, and sometimes composition of place. Bourdieu points out that identity exists only in individuals outside of self (1991:224). The perceptions aroused in the listener and, those who share self's context, are what matter in identity and linguistic ethnicity. Two concepts emerge. First, a "dialect of manifestation" (Bourdieu 1991:224). A reason is given to the label. Generally, a reality of sorts appears in the mind of whom the dialogue is directed. Next, what Bourdieu terms "officialization" occurs (1991:224). A label, when perceived as a reality, is manipulated from the particularity of one, to the sharedness of many. The identity becomes a category which encapsulates the user. A child's declaration that "words will never hurt me", may be true if expression is examined for physical characteristics, but action with words (Chaika), and the stigmas words may carry (Bourdieu), make them a very real reality.

**Pair Three**

Pair three is composed of two aged African-American women. The first subject was born and raised in Wichita. Most of her life she spent as a resident of 67214 specifically, the "eighteen-hundred block" of Piatt. 1821 Piatt, places her in the northeastern portion of the zip code district. Her views of 67214 and the larger urban unit (Wichita), are of "a great place to have lived". The first subject was in her late to mid seventies. She identified herself as, first, "great", then as a "community worker". In times of trouble, she would seek out the police. The reason for this, she explained, was due to the fact that her son was the local "police chief". Naming neighbors was not a problem for the first subject. As the "block captain", it was her business to know virtually everyone in the area. The first subject lived alone, but at the time of the interview her granddaughter was present.

The second subject was an elderly woman in her mid to late sixties, living just north of the intersection of 13th Street and Hydraulic. This placed her in the north-central portion of 67214. She lived alone, identifying herself as "me" a first time, and "alive" when asked for a second identifier. The second subject viewed her residence as part of a "neighborhood". The neighborhood was "small" but "very good" in nature. Neighbors, for the second subject were known generally, without an associated name or only by a greeting. As a result, in times of distress, she would turn to city wide emergency services for help. Coke and Twaite, in *The Black Elderly: Satisfaction and Quality of Later Life*, examine the nature of coping mechanisms among the African-
American elderly. Coping mechanisms exist as reactions to stress native to environment, status, and role (1995:3). The basis of Coke's and Twaite's conclusion came from an interview study performed in 1986. The study examined forty elderly blacks and the coping mechanisms they employed in the form of post-retirement activity (Coke and Twaite, 1995:3). An important aspect of this activity was the taking of roles. The role of a care giver to the young ranked highest among activities most valued to elderly.

The study found that black elders viewed the family and community as the primary mechanisms to cope with stress (Coke and Twaite 1991:4). It affected values of self-esteem and self-worth. Obligations of descent and geographic sharedness were sources of security later in life. Similar to the Hispanic-American elderly surveyed, African-Americans gave a higher degree of trust to organizations of community than those of agency or the state. In fact, underutilization of public assistance institutions seem to be a common occurrence within Hispanic and African sub-cultures in the United States (Moore 1985:158). This seems to be common within the agency groups designed for mental and physical health treatment (Moore 1985:158). It was assumed that for this reason that the black elderly surveyed, coped successfully with high levels of stress. Suicide rates were considerably lower for aged blacks in relation to whites (Coke and Twaite 1995:6). West Africa provides a strong cross-cultural comparison for some of the behavior activities of African-Americans. Similar securities are provided to those of elder status. Coke and Twaite examined marriage, kinship and the similarities expressed in family structure between both cultures (Coke and Twaite 1995:22). Kinship strategies among West Africans incorporate a system of "reciprocal roles and responsibilities" based upon a shared perception of descent (Coke and Twaite 1995:22). Familial and consanguineal ties provided the foundation for a system of obligatory economic and social assistance.

The African-American family and community can be viewed in a similar way. Marriage, for instance, entails a post-marital system of support which requires the involvement of both, the bride and groom's family (Coke and Twaite 1995:23). This concern for the safety of consanguineal kin, seems to be a catalyst for a large portion of Parental involvement with the marital status of their children. The concern of a mother for the offspring, the role she plays in their upbringing, and the bond she establishes with their mate, seem to be a strong familial tie and concern both in West Africa and the United States groups. Motherhood, and its nurturing role is an important social activity intimate to the survival of the consanguineal, corporate descent group (Coke and Twaite 1995:25). The first subject, as a grandmother, played an important role in the nurturing of her granddaughter. While being interviewed the subjects young relation remained; embracing her at the waist. Nurturing and marital welfare form the focus of kin relation among West African and African-American groups. To a large degree, success in marital roles becomes tied to feelings of life satisfaction (Coke and Twaite 1995:23). This conclusion of Coke and Twaite, drew upon survey data taken from two thousand, seven African-Americans eighteen and older (1995:23). Individuals who were found to have higher responses of "life satisfaction" generally were involved in marriages with strong affiliations to children (Coke and Twaite 1995:24). Involvement in marriage and the raising of young, for members of African-American communities would place them at the center of a social network designed as an aid to survival. This trend seems to have applied to elderly who assumed roles of secondary care giver. Those elderly included by the Coke and Twaite survey, living alone and without strong family roles were found to have much lower levels of life satisfaction. With decreased satisfaction, coping mechanisms provided by involvement with community and family were not available. In light of this, responses of the second subject become explainable. An identity of "alive", of merely a living existence, may allude to a reliance on fate. The second subject response of "me", her object self, represented the only individual available to her. If a situation arose which called for abilities outside her own, she would unhesitantly turn to public aid. Her weak connection to those around her would cause her to seek coping aids outside the community. For this reason, obligations of role, to the community and family were not as evident as those of the first subject.

The first subject's role of secondary care giver and "community worker", represents another similarity to West African culture. The elderly among West Africans posses a venerated place in both the family and community (Coke and Twaite 1995:27). Their familial roles of fatherhood and motherhood are preserved throughout life. Women are viewed as sources of family enrichment and insurance for the survival of corporate descent. Men, as they age, retain qualities of guidance and leadership shared with women during sacred events (Coke and Twaite 1995:27). The elderly become the carriers of past cultural history and its maintenance.
through ritual. In much the same way, the first subject possessed a clear role of community leader. She viewed the "eighteen hundred block", as "her" neighborhood. Her leadership role was reinforced by the social position of her son, the "police chief". As police chief, he assumed leadership in a security mechanism outside that of community. His position of agency mirrored her communal role. The close relation she had with her environment and her familial involvement in its upkeep, expressed itself in the title of "block captain".

The first subject's perceived success in the fulfillment of role and responsibilities both as community leader, and care giver to her grandchild, may have been incorporated in the original identification of "great". The fulfillment of role in place may have bolstered her feelings of satisfaction. The loss of role and any increasing inability due to age location or health of the second subject may have cut her off from her context. Concepts of self-worth and self-esteem, decrease as duty becomes replaced by devaluation (Coke and Twaite 1995:33). For the second subject, inability becomes compounded with minority status. All that remains, is the self and the personal force which keeps it going. Coke and Twaite found that as one becomes older, there is a seeming loss of identity (1995:34). The important factors of identity among the African-American elderly, such as social role, have a direct positive or negative affect on identity. Those who are able to maintain or recapture role, will decrease the decaying affects of age on self and life satisfaction.

Discussion

Human action and interaction along with the behaviors associated with these social patterns are closely associated to the context of both the event, in this case the interview, and the life experience of participants. In the book *Metaphors of Identity*, Thomas Fitzgerald defines identity as "self-in-context". Self can exist in two forms. A self separate from what surrounds it, the "I", and a "me" or self molded by role and social place. "I", or what Alan O. Ross terms ones' subject self was the focus of this survey. Ross' subject self may be physically separate from context but, may also be directly affected by it. Concepts of identity and ethnicity, represent markers visible to both, the individual expressing them or those outside observing them. These markers can and are manipulated by the individual who it originates from and the environment he or she is a part of. Environment cannot be isolated from its occupants and their perception of who they are.

Stavan's concept of "sub-cultures" existing in the Hispanic-American community seems to be a social reality for the youth and elderly interviewed as part of this essay. Strong divisions were recognizable between those who seek incorporation into the American mainstream culture and those, a transitional group, "living in the hyphen" (Stavans 1995:156). This Mexican-Hispanic duality seems to create a division within the Latino culture and those surround it. In the case of the Hispanic woman, this separation can become a force of perpetuating isolation. The Hispanic elderly in these interviews seemed to recognize ethnic identity as a further limitation, while the youth viewed it as a security. Stavan's idea of a complex "of two hearts" seems tangible among those surveyed. Those individuals obsessed with cultural satisfaction and empowerment divided from those "traumatized" by the distinction and haunted by the "painful unresolved past" (Stavans 1995:168). Among the elderly interviewed for this essay, cultural factors seem to have influenced their perception of life satisfaction and, how they expressed it. Ethnicity and the successful fulfillment of related roles seem to affect the level of this satisfaction. Subjects, male and young in age residing in 67214 also stood out for their views on who they were. They stood out from others surveyed, due to the fact that they shared a common geographic location and sub-culture yet, differed as to how they described it. Each subject viewed context, their role, and a group's role in that context differently. For one, the "ghetto" became an ethnicity of space. He clearly expressed feelings of separation and non-opportunity to the interviewer in his mannerisms, gesture, tone, and response. Alienation can represent a trait of this social isolation. Region, identity and ethnicity of place, as viewed by Bourdieu, require the inclusion of traits of origin and location (1991:221). Linguistic labels incorporated by this process are comparable to symbolic representations of self-in-context. These symbols, need not be physically real, as much as, icons for a perceived reality. One subject's identity as "black", in the manner it was presented to the interviewer, along with further responses, associated its meaning not strictly with a reality of skin color but, with a perceived reality of self-in-context and sharedness. Linguistic expression can be viewed, then as something that can manipulate the associations and concerns within the mind of "the other";
in this case the listener. The interview process incorporated by this essay did not include a regional survey that quantified and tabulated the responses of hundreds of 67214 inhabitants. What it did was to focus on the responses of a small group of randomly picked individuals. Individuals who had nothing in common but the last five digits of their address. It tried to understand the way in which one identifies oneself and what kinds of social or psychological theory exists relating expression and place. Responses were distinct; they were reflective of the people expressing them, and they did conform to a number of social trends. But the question must be asked as to where a researcher, interviewer, or theorist should draw the line between conjecture and fact and, what answer is truly an expression of self-in-context versus an answer that is spurious or contrived.

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