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# 14

## Behavior as Mind in Context

### *A Cultural Psychology Analysis of “Paranoid” Suspicion in West African Worlds*

GLENN ADAMS  
PHIA S. SALTER  
KATE M. PICKETT  
TUĞÇE KURTIŞ  
NIA L. PHILLIPS

Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t  
after you.

— ATTRIBUTED TO KURT COBAIN (among others)

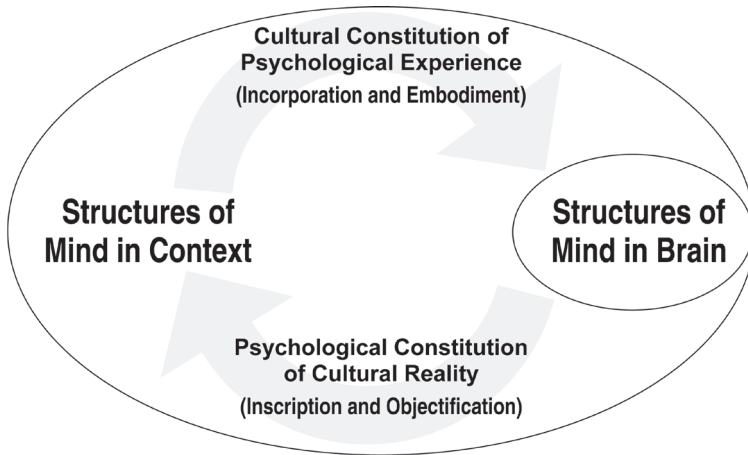
Like some other contributors to this book (Kitayama & Imada, Chapter 9), we approach the theme of “mind in context” from the perspective of cultural psychology (CP). This theme is central to the concept of *culture*, which we define as *explicit and implicit patterns of historically derived and selected ideas and their material manifestations in institutions, practices, and artifacts* (Adams & Markus, 2004, based on Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 357). In contrast to popular associations of culture with group, this statement explicitly defines culture as structures of mind in context: “patterns of ideas . . . and their material manifestations” in everyday worlds. Associated with this definition is a conception of culture not as membership in rigidly bounded groups, but rather as engagement with flexible structures of mind in context distributed across unbounded worlds.

The key to our discussion of *behavior* as mind in context comes from the second half of this definition: *Cultural patterns may be considered both products of action and as conditioning elements of further action* (also based on Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 357; see Adams & Markus, 2004). Although theory and research in psychology typically portray behavior as the end product of experience, a CP analysis implies a more dynamic conception in which behavior—and its intentional counterpart, action (Bruner, 1990)—is also a “conditioning element” of further experience. As such, behavior and its observable sediment constitute *intentional worlds*: structures of mind in context that not only bear psychological traces of previous behavior and action, but also direct subsequent behavior and action toward particular ends.

### **“Mind in Context” as Cultural Psychology**

A CP analysis illuminates the theme of “mind in context” in two important senses that we have represented in Figure 14.1. The top arrow of Figure 14.1 refers to the *cultural constitution of psychological experience*: the idea that human experience is not the simple expression of inborn genetic programming, but instead requires *incorporation* or *embodiment* (literally, taking into the body) of structures of mind in context. These structures are not merely interpretative frames applied after the fact to make sense of experience, but instead are *constitutive* of behavior and experience; that is, behavior and experience would not emerge as they do without the ecological scaffolding that structures of mind in context provide. The implication is that to understand observed regularities of psychological functioning one must understand the often ignored structures of mind in context—including cultural models (Holland & Quinn, 1987), social representations (Moscovici, 1984), and discursive repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987)—that provide the ecological scaffolding for these regularities.

The bottom arrow of Figure 14.1 refers to the *psychological constitution of cultural worlds*: the idea that the world is not a natural object separate from human action, but instead is a psychological product. In the course of everyday experience, people continually reproduce structures of mind in context, into which they *inscribe* and *objectify* their beliefs and desires (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Moscovici, 1984). Rather than an inert mass, the observable sediment of people’s behavior carries a psychological charge that exerts independent influence on subsequent action. The implication is something like *mind in society* (Vygotsky, 1978): the idea that the structure of mind is not limited to brain architecture but also extends to psychological traces of behavioral



**FIGURE 14.1.** Mutual constitution of mind and context. The structures of mind in brain that are the typical focus of psychological research exist in a dynamic relationship of mutual constitution with structures of mind in context. These ecological structures of mind in context function as intentional worlds (Shweder, 1990): deposits of behavioral sediment that not only reflect beliefs and desires implicit in previous action (bottom arrow) but also direct subsequent behavior and action toward particular ends (top arrow).

sediment deposited in everyday worlds (see Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, & Morris, 2002; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008)

To summarize, the structures of mind in brain that are the typical focus of psychological research exist in a dynamic relationship of mutual constitution—the idea that “psyche and culture ... make each other up” (Shweder, 1990, p. 1)—with structures of mind in context. Looking backward, these structures of mind in context represent the psychological sediment of previous behavior and experience. Looking forward, these structures of mind in context provide the ecological scaffolding for subsequent behavior and experience. Underlying structures of mind in context typically remain invisible or unrecognized in mainstream psychological research. The task of a CP analysis is to illuminate them.

## OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES

To illustrate this approach to “mind in context” we consider three cases of apparently “paranoid” suspicion in West African worlds: cau-

tion about intimate relationship (Adams, 2005), an outbreak of penis-shrinking panic (Adams & Dzokoto, 2007), and suspicion of racism in a vaccination campaign (Obadare, 2005). These cases resemble paranoid behavior to the extent that they involve people's unwarranted concern that they are the target of malice; however, a CP analysis involves two steps that suggest reconsideration of the "paranoid" label (Adams & Salter, 2007). The first step is to *normalize* apparently paranoid behavior; rather than lack of contact with reality, apparently paranoid behavior may reflect normal engagement with ecological structures of mind in context that promote concern about malice. The second step is to *denature* the sense of freedom from malice; rather than the natural expression of inborn programming, this pattern may reflect structures of mind in context that insulate people from concern about malice. Table 14.1 provides an overview of the structures of mind in context associated with both naturalizing (left column) and denaturing (right column) steps for each of the three empirical cases.

### **BEWARE OF FRIENDS: CAUTIOUS APPROACHES TO RELATIONSHIP**

If one walks through a taxi stand in various West African worlds, one is likely to find cars with stickers or painted slogans (e.g., "Beware of friends" or "I am afraid of my friends, even you") that advise caution about personal relationship. Resonating with these bits of mind in context, research consistently reveals that people across a variety of West African worlds report a smaller network of friends, express doubts about intimate disclosure, and express greater concern about enemies in intimate spaces than do people across diverse American worlds (Adams, 2005; Adams & Plaut, 2003). How is one to understand these differences?

The tendency in psychological science is to view caution about relationship, to the degree observed in West African settings, as an abnormal deviation from natural reality. Indeed, within mainstream psychology and the worlds that it reflects, the claim to be the target of hidden enemies is a sign of paranoia (with connotations of delusion). Similarly, research in mainstream psychology has emphasized the importance of emotional intimacy and self-disclosure for relationship well-being and production of closeness (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). From this perspective, one might regard the reluctance to share intimate information observed in many West African worlds as a suboptimal form of relationship (e.g., avoidant attachment)

**TABLE 14.1. Structures of Mind in Context That Underlie (Responses to) Apparently “Paranoid” Suspicion**

Normalizing “paranoid” suspicion in West African worlds	Denaturing lack of suspicion in North American worlds
Example 1: Cautious approaches to relationship	Turning the lens: Open approaches to relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded-interdependent selfways (Adams &amp; Dzokoto, 2003; Carrier, 1999; Markus et al., 1997)</li> <li>• Relational models: authority ranking and communal sharing (Fiske, 1991)</li> <li>• Practices of secrecy associated with concerns about exposure (Shaw, 2000)</li> <li>• Arranged marriage focused on complementary roles; lifelong residence with extended kin (Adams et al., 2004)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntaristic-independent selfways (Adams &amp; Dzokoto, 2003; Carrier, 1999; Markus et al., 1997)</li> <li>• Relational models: market pricing and equality matching (Fiske, 1991)</li> <li>• Practices of self-expression and affective individualism (Bellah et al., 1985; O’Conner, 1998; Oliner, 1998)</li> <li>• Companionate marriage based on romantic love; neolocal residence with nuclear family (Adams et al., 2004)</li> </ul>
Example 2: Mass episodes of genital-shrinking panic	Turning the lens: Biomedical model of illness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habits associated with embedded-interdependent selfways: holistic perception (Nisbett et al., 2001); somatization of affect (Dzokoto &amp; Okazaki, 2006); and sense of openness to interpersonal influence (Reisman, 1986).</li> <li>• Practices and artifacts that “objectify” or “make real” sorcery and witchcraft (Geschiere, 1997; Kirby, 1993; Meyer, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habits associated with voluntaristic-independent selfways: analytic perception (Nisbett et al., 2001); dualistic separation of mind and body; and sense of imperviousness to interpersonal influence (Adams, 2005).</li> <li>• Tools for diagnosis and treatment of distress (e.g., DSM-IV; see Adams &amp; Salter, 2007)</li> </ul>
Example 3: Perception of racism in health care systems	Turning the lens: Denial of racism in U.S. society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective memory of colonialism and awareness about past incidents of racism (Adams et al., 2006; Eiser &amp; Ellis, 2007)</li> <li>• Community discourse and social representations about present incidents of racism (Turner, 1994)</li> <li>• Official apology of the U.S. government for Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 1997)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atomistic pedagogies of racism as individual bias or prejudice (Adams et al., 2008)</li> <li>• Sanitized representations of history that “white out” unflattering acts of past racism (Salter &amp; Adams, 2009)</li> <li>• Color-blind or glorifying constructions of U.S. identity (Phillips &amp; Adams, 2009)</li> </ul>

(Collins & Read, 1990; Dion & Dion, 1985; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). Alternatively, one might interpret practices of caution as a form of *self-silencing* (Jack, 1991): inhibition and suppression (rather than indulgence and expression) of personal thoughts and feelings. Research has associated self-silencing with decreased relationship satisfaction, especially among women in heterosexual relationships (see Harper & Welsh, 2007; Jack, 1991).

### ***Normalizing Caution***

Rather than consider it a manifestation of abnormality, a CP approach explains caution about relationship in West African settings as a sign of normal sensitivity to structures of mind in context: *embedded-interdependent* selfways that promote both a sense of rootedness in context and an experience of relationship as an ecological affordance (i.e., inherent in the structure of everyday life; see Adams, Anderson, & Adonu, 2004; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997). Embedded-interdependent selfways are not just a set of ideas about connection, but also include the “material manifestation” of ideas in concrete realities such as limited social and spatial mobility; the daily practice of eating together from communal bowls; institutions associated with arranged, often polygamous marriage (see Doodoo, 1998); and lifelong communal coresidence in extended-family compounds. These structures of mind in context promote “thick” or “sticky” forms of relationship characterized by dense, overlapping networks and mutual obligations of material support. These structures promote caution about relationship because they imply limitations on people’s capacity to choose connections or to insulate themselves from the potential friction that accompanies embeddedness.

In worlds where embedded interdependent selfways provide the ecological scaffolding for experience, the construction of emotional intimacy through self-disclosure may be less imperative for well-being than mainstream research suggests (Chen, 1995). One reason has to do with lack of motivation. The dense networks of connection associated with worlds of embedded interdependence render practices of mutual disclosure unnecessary for the production of common ground. Instead, common ground may arise as a by-product of interaction with a relatively constant, interrelated set of people (Holtgraves, 1997). Another reason has to do with concerns about privacy and self-protection. The overlapping nature of relationship networks in worlds of embedded interdependence affords the possibility that violations of privacy due to revelation of secrets will cause more harm than would occur if one’s relationships were compartmentalized and distributed across widely dispersed networks. In these settings, psychological well-being may be associated

with structures of mind in context that promote guarded management of information rather than open disclosure (Shaw, 2000).

Likewise, the implications of silence for relationship satisfaction may be less damaging in worlds where embedded-interdependent selfways provide the ecological scaffolding for experience. For example, research among women in a Turkish setting indicates a positive correlation between apparent “self-silencing” and satisfaction in romantic relationships (Kurtiş, 2009). A likely source of this correlation lies in the structures of mind in context—including a strong emphasis on relationship, family integrity, loyalty, and conflict avoidance (Imamoğlu, 1987; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1973, 1984)—associated with embedded-interdependent selfways that inform traditional Turkish worlds. Self-silencing may be valuable to the extent that inhibition of personal needs and opinions reduces the potential for interpersonal friction that can have particularly disastrous consequences in worlds of embedded interdependence. Traditional gender roles further legitimize the status of silence among Turkish women, making self-silencing a normative practice and therefore less hazardous for personal and relationship well-being.

In short, a CP analysis suggests that relationship tendencies of caution and guarded silence observed in West African settings are not manifestations of pathology. Instead these tendencies reflect particular structures of mind in context: the ecological scaffolding for relationship associated with embedded-interdependent selfways.

### ***Turning the Analytic Lens: Denaturing Openness***

Besides providing a “normalizing” account of caution about relationship in West African worlds, an equally important contribution of a CP analysis is to denature the open approach to relationship (and associated sense of freedom from enemies) that masquerades as “natural” in mainstream psychology. Contrary to the portrayal as simple human nature, a CP analysis links this way of being to structures of mind-in-context: *voluntaristic-independent* selfways that promote both a sense of insulation from context and an experience of relationship as the tenuous creation of inherently separate selves (Adams et al., 2004). Again, voluntaristic-independent selfways are not just a set of ideas about separation, but also include the “material manifestation” of ideas in such concrete realities as mobility-affording transportation and communication infrastructure, the practice of “leaving home” in young adulthood, the daily practice of eating from individual place settings, and residence in self-contained apartment units. Resonating with what Fiske (1991) called a *market-pricing* (MP) *model* of relationship, these structures of mind in context promote an experience of the social world as a relatively friction-

less “free market” populated by unfettered “free agents” who are both enabled and compelled to arrange their own connections. People feel free not only to construct a broad network of friends but also to avoid negative consequences of connection (including personal enemies).

From this perspective, apparently standard patterns of relationship observed in mainstream psychology—including the prominence of emotional intimacy, self-disclosure, and their implications for well-being and closeness—are not a simple expression of their natural importance. Instead these patterns reflect structures of mind in context associated with voluntaristic-independent selfways. One set of structures concern practices of self-expression associated with *affective individualism*: a value emphasis on exploration, expression, and indulgence of unique, individual feelings (Baumeister, 1987; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985; Kim, 2002; Kim & Sherman, 2007). Another set of structures concerns relatively direct communication styles. The relatively thin forms of relationship that prevail in settings of voluntaristic independence do not afford a deep sense of “common ground” that permits people to leave much unsaid (Holtgraves, 1997). As a result, people must create common ground through processes of mutual disclosure (O’Conner, 1998; Oliner, 1998). Similarly, because local worlds do not afford a sense of inherent commonality and interdependence, people attempt to create commonality through joint purchases, jointly designed living space, or other practices of place making that produce material interdependence (Lohmann, Arriaga, & Goodfriend, 2003). Rather than consider these practices as inherent motivations for self-expression wired into brain architecture, one can interpret such practices of self-disclosure and domestic place making as cultural innovations for the production of emotional intimacy. As such, these practices provide important means to ensure connection and satisfaction in worlds where voluntaristic-independent selfways provide the ecological scaffolding for experience.

### ***Extension: The Importance of Attractiveness in Everyday Life***

As the preceding section illustrates, a CP analysis applies the theme of mind in context to explain not only to explain apparently abnormal phenomena observed in exotic, “other” cultures, but also apparently “natural” phenomena observed in the familiar settings that dominate mainstream research. From this perspective, many relationship phenomena reported in the typical psychology study are not, as mainstream scientific accounts are inclined to portray them, natural expressions of inborn tendencies encoded in brain architecture. Instead, they are eco-



logically grounded habits of relationship that are continually reconstituted as people necessarily tune themselves to structures of mind in context. Having illuminated these structures of mind in context, it becomes easier to see them at work in other relationship phenomena.

For example, consider one of the best-known relationship phenomena in social psychology: the importance of attractiveness in everyday life. Decades of research have documented that attractive people experience better outcomes than do unattractive people (see Langlois et al., 2000). Standard accounts typically locate these effects in evolved brain structures (e.g., Buss, 1989; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). In contrast, a CP perspective suggests that attractiveness effects also reflect local selfways and other structures of mind in context. The relationship between attraction and life outcomes may be greatest in worlds where voluntaristic-independent selfways provide the ecological scaffolding for experience. In worlds that afford people freedom (and compel them) to choose their own relationships, preference (as a determinant of choice) and attraction (as a determinant of preference) gain importance in relationship life. Attraction may be less important in worlds of embedded interdependence, where the thicker or stickier nature of relationship means that personal choice and preference have less impact on life outcomes.

In support of these ideas, research suggests that the relationship between attractiveness and self-reported life outcomes is greater not only (1) in North American settings than in West African settings but also (2) in friend than in family relationships, and (3) in urban than in rural spaces (see Anderson, Adams, & Plaut, 2008, Study 1; Plaut, Adams, & Anderson, in press). Likewise, research suggests that *physical attractiveness stereotyping*—the tendency to rate anticipated outcomes of attractive people more positively than those of unattractive people—is not only greater in the United States than in Ghanaian settings and in urban rather than rural spaces but also (within Ghanaian settings) is greater among people “primed” to think about personal characteristics than personal connections (Anderson et al., 2008, Study 2). Rather than a natural property of mind in brain, this research suggests that the importance of attractiveness for life outcomes reflects structures of mind in context associated with voluntaristic-independent selfways.

### **DISAPPEARING PENISES: GENITAL-SHRINKING PANIC**

If one stays in West African settings for an extended period, one is likely to encounter something like the episode of *genital-shrinking panic* (GSP)

that occurred at several sites in Ghana during January 1997 (Dzokoto & Adams, 2005).<sup>1</sup> In its typical presentations, GSP refers to the mass occurrence of distress in which men fear that their penises are shrinking due to magical theft. People in the 1997 episode typically attributed the motivation for such theft to the desire for money, either by holding stolen genitalia for ransom or by using them as ingredients for the production of “money medicine.” In any case, the accusation of penis theft placed the accused thief in mortal danger from beatings that bystanders often administered as “instant justice” (see Adams & Dzokoto, 2007; Dzokoto & Adams, 2005; Mather, 2005).

### ***Normalizing Genital Shrinking Panic***

As with cautious approaches to relationship, outsider accounts are likely to frame GSP incidents as cases of paranoid behavior to the extent that they involve irrational fear of harm. Indeed, for people in highly educated worlds, the belief that people could steal penises through sorcery or witchcraft seems like exactly the sort of “superstitious nonsense”—reflecting delusion or lack of contact with reality—that science combats (Jackson, 1998). In contrast, a CP perspective suggests that what predisposes people to GSP is not paranoid delusion, superstitious ignorance, or lack of contact with reality, but normal sensitivity to structures of mind in context.

### ***Cultural Grounding of Genital-Shrinking Panic***

These structures of mind in context include specific concepts or institutions. As hinted in the previous paragraph, a prevailing construction of reality that underlies concerns about both penis theft and malicious false accusation is the set of concepts referred to in English as *witchcraft*, *sorcery*, or *juju* (see de-Graft Aikins, 2004; Geschiere, 1997; Meyer, 2003). These concepts propose not only magical means through which penis theft might occur but also the existence of malicious enemies who seek to do harm (whether through magical or nonmagical means). Regardless of whether people typically “believe in” them, witchcraft and sorcery are prominent local concepts that are readily available for people to appropriate when—as in the case of GSP—doing so helps them make sense of everyday events.

In addition, the reference to mind in context includes more general cultural models. For example, research associates the embedded-interdependent selfways to which we referred in the previous section with several habits of being that may actively foster penis-shrinking experience (Dzokoto & Adams, 2005). These habits include a sense of openness to

interpersonal influence and automatic tuning to social context (Riesman, 1986); “holistic” perceptual habits that direct attention to contextual sources of experience (see Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001); and *somatization*: the tendency to experience negative affect in bodily rather than psychological forms (e.g., Ryder et al., 2008). These habits of mind are not superficial interpretations applied to more basic experience; instead they play a *constitutive* role in GSP, such that mass episodes would not occur without the scaffolding that these models and representations provide (Good, 1994). To the extent that people inhabit spaces where these habits of mind are (or become) prominent, they are (or become) more likely to experience GSP.

### *Dynamic Reproduction of Genital-Shrinking Panic Reality*

So far, this discussion of GSP has emphasized processes of incorporation or embodiment, represented by the top arrow in Figure 14.1, by which patterns of mind inscribed in local worlds come to shape psychological experience. However, an adequate account of GSP and its relationship to structures of mind in context must also direct attention to the processes of inscription or objectification, represented by the bottom arrow in Figure 14.1, by which everyday belief and behavior reproduce cultural reality.

One way in which beliefs about GSP create their own reality is an intrapersonal version of self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>2</sup> In this version, episodes of GSP activate ecological structures of mind in context that promote a charged atmosphere of heightened sensitivity to potential malice. In this charged atmosphere, an otherwise innocuous event can trigger a man’s concern that he is the target of penis tampering. This concern can arouse intense anxiety and somatic reactions, especially in relatively plastic organs like genitalia, which the man is likely to interpret as confirmation rather than a consequence of his anxious beliefs. This interpretation is likely to create more anxiety, which increases the physiological response of shrinking, which creates more anxiety, and so on, in a self-fulfilling spiral (see Oyebode, Jamieson, Mullaney, & Davison, 1986).

Another way in which beliefs about GSP create their own reality is an interpersonal version of self-fulfilling prophecy akin to behavioral confirmation of stereotypes and other interpersonal expectations (Snyder, 1984). In this version, ecological structures of mind in context associated with GSP include an atmosphere of interpersonal suspicion that has self-fulfilling consequences. If a man meets a woman in town and appears reluctant to return her greeting, this behavioral performance constitutes an instance of mind in context associated with distrust. Based on her observation of the man’s behavioral performance, the woman

may infer that he dislikes her, and she may respond with suspicion-laden behavior of her own. Her behavioral performance further reproduces ecological structures of mind in context associated with distrust, which the man may interpret as confirmation of his initial suspicions, without recognizing his role in eliciting her response. The man's interpretation may lead to further performances of suspicion, triggering more suspicion-laden responses, and so on, in a self-fulfilling spiral.

Resonating with most work, our example has portrayed behavioral confirmation as a dyadic process. To appreciate implications for the theme of mind in context, one must extend the analysis beyond the level of dyadic interaction (Claire & Fiske, 1998). Behavioral performances of suspicion do more than produce isolated dyads of dislike; in addition, they reproduce ecological structures of mind in context that promote suspicion and GSP among extradyadic observers.

Likewise, one must extend the analysis of behavioral confirmation beyond confirmation of stereotypes or other expectations to consider implications for the reproduction of reality in general. Each time people invoke concepts such as *sorcery*, they not only reproduce those concepts in their original domains of relevance (e.g., erectile dysfunction), but also often extend them to new domains (e.g., school examinations and international soccer matches; Geschiere, 1997, p. 4). Likewise, whether people believe claims of penis theft (and participate in administration of instant justice) or construe claims as false accusation (and intervene heroically to rescue the accused person), their actions constitute behavioral artifacts that serve as informational social influence or emergent norms to guide others' subsequent responses (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Stahl, 1982). In general, people's behavioral responses to individual cases of GSP often reinscribe and reconstitute the structures of mind in context that are constitutive of GSP experience in the first place. This idea has three important implications.

First, processes of inscription and objectification represented by the bottom arrow of Figure 14.1 are essential to the "epidemic" character of GSP episodes. In the initial stages of an episode, the structures of mind in context that promote GSP may be relatively inactive, such that only people who are especially situated to experience GSP do so. However, the subsequent behavior of these "early adopters" strengthens or activates the facilitating structures of mind in context that underlie GSP, such that they eventually promote GSP experience among people who were originally less situated to experience it. Without this active reconstitution of the structures of mind in context that are constitutive of GSP, it is unlikely that GSP would impact so many people.

Second, processes of inscription and objectification help to illuminate the collective nature of GSP. What makes GSP *collective* is not its

“group” character (i.e., that it occurred in mass episodes rather than isolated cases) but instead the extent to which each person’s distress is afforded by the fertile common ground that the behavioral sediment of other people’s experience provides. Rather than the aggregate of multiple, isolated individuals constructing similar experience from the same raw materials, mass episodes occur because each person constructs an experience by using the scaffolding provided by the accumulated, material sediment of others’ behavior.

Third, this reference to behavioral sediment helps to illuminate the idea of “mind in society.” The structures of mind in context that provide fertile common ground for GSP are not only embodied in individual subjectivity but also are objectified in everyday worlds (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Moscovici, 1984). Rather than transmission from one individual to another across a psychological vacuum, the process of social influence associated with GSP flows through ecologically inscribed structures of mind in context.

### ***Turning the Analytic Lens: Denaturing the Biomedical Model***

Besides providing a normalizing account of GSP in West African settings, the second task of a CP analysis is to provide a denaturing account that illuminates the typically invisible structures of mind in context that inform responses to GSP in mainstream health science. Perhaps the most important of these structures is the prevailing *biomedical* model of health and illness. The key points associated with this model include a construction of health as freedom from suffering; an emphasis on biochemical and physiological processes; and a corresponding inattention to social-psychological determinants of well-being, illness, diagnosis, and healing.

Rather than a culture-neutral reflection of natural reality, the biomedical model resonates with the atomistic or independent selfways characteristic of “modern” societies: structures of mind in context that propose abstraction of person from social context and locate the roots of experience in the internal properties of existentially separate individuals. Although this particular cultural foundation provides conceptual advantages for understanding biochemical and physiological manifestations of health and illness, it creates problems for understanding other manifestations. Resonating with the topic of this section, one problem with the biomedical model is that it tends to obscure the extent to which embodied beliefs—and the ecological structures of mind in context to which embodied beliefs are continuously tuned—are constitutive of bodily experience. As a result, mainstream health science has difficulty

accommodating phenomena such as placebo effects (Harrington, 1999) or mass psychogenic illness (Colligan, Pennebaker, & Murphy, 1982), in which belief plays a central role.

Resonating with the topic of the next section, another problem with the biomedical model is that its internal gaze and atomistic focus obscure structural, socioeconomic, and geopolitical forces associated with socioecological variation in health and disease (see Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Williams & Collins, 1995). Regardless of individual scientists' intentions, an atomistic focus on physiological processes constitutes a politically consequential "intentional world" that, by ignoring structural determinants of ill health (e.g., malnutrition and poverty), contributes to the reproduction of disease and discomfort in marginalized spaces (see Hepworth, 2006). From this perspective, an adequate health science requires greater attention to the structures of mind in context that influence not only the experience but also the study of health and illness (see Adams & Salter, 2007).

### **SUSPICION OF VACCINE TAMPERING: FAILURE OF THE GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE**

In 1988, worldwide health organizations launched a global initiative to eradicate poliomyelitis virus (Global Polio Eradication Initiative, *www.polioeradication.org*). Although the campaign came close to its goal, it stalled (and eventually reversed) in the face of popular resistance to vaccination drives in northern Nigeria. At issue were concerns that doses of oral polio vaccine (OPV) were contaminated with HIV or were designed to render female children infertile as means of population control (Ajjiya, 2003). As with suspicion of enemies and incidents of GSP, acts of OPV refusal constitute paranoid behavior to the extent that they appear to involve irrational fear of harm. Indeed, international health organizations generally framed people's suspicions as "unfounded concerns," which they hoped that health workers could alleviate by exposing people to "correct" knowledge (WHO News, 2004). In contrast to such relatively pathologizing characterizations of OPV refusal, a CP analysis emphasizes two points (Adams & Salter, 2007).

#### ***Normalizing Suspicion of Vaccine Tampering***

First, without endorsing claims of vaccine tampering or advocating vaccine refusal, a CP approach normalizes suspicion of vaccine tampering. Rather as "unfounded concern," these suspicions have a reasonable

foundation in structures of mind in context associated with collective memory of racism (Adams & Salter, 2007; see Whaley, 2001). People who refuse OPV may do so not because of ignorance or delusion, but because they are more educated about past incidents of racism than are people who accept OPV. These incidents include documented cases of medical racism, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Freimuth et al., 2001), sterilization practices designed to control population growth among people of African descent (Mass, 1977), or practices for research in African settings that the same researchers would find unacceptable in European or U.S. settings (Lurie & Wolfe, 1997).

### ***Turning the Analytic Lens: Denaturing Denial of Racism***

Second, a CP analysis denatures scientific common sense. Rather than unbiased reflection of truth, trust in the nonracist character of medical science or other mainstream institutions may reflect faith, denial, or outright ignorance. From this perspective, mainstream reactions to OPV refusal are not based on neutral reading of events but instead reflect an “unfounded” inclination by the medical and scientific establishment to deny pervasive racism and remnants of colonialism.

Empirical evidence relevant to this point comes from our research on group differences in perception of racism in U.S. society. Relative to people from a variety of historically oppressed groups, white Americans tend to deny the extent to which racism is responsible for events in U.S. society. In part, this group difference in perception of racism reflects divergent motivational pressures. White Americans are motivated to deny the ongoing significance of racism to preserve a sense of collective self-worth and to defend the legitimacy of a status quo from which they derive benefits (Adams, Tormala, & O’Brien, 2006; Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). However, even when people genuinely strive for an honest assessment, group differences can also result because different communities inhabit and reproduce different ecologies of mind in context that promote divergent judgments about the ongoing significance of racism. We have investigated this idea with respect to three different manifestations of mind in context.

### ***Representations of Racism***

One manifestation concerns representations of racism itself. Relative to people from various oppressed groups, white Americans are motivated to endorse an *atomistic* conception of racism as a problem of individual bias but are less likely to endorse a *sociocultural* concep-

tion of racism as a problem inherent in the very fabric of American society (Adams, O'Brien, & Nelson, 2006; Bobo, 2001). To investigate the consequences of these different conceptions, we constructed tutorials that took raw material from mainstream research—for example, discussions of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) and automatic racism (Devine, 1989)—and presented it in one of two ways (Adams, Edkins, Lacka, Pickett, & Cheryan, 2008). Drawing heavily upon existing pedagogy, the *standard* tutorial presented the topic of racism in a relatively atomistic fashion as the product of biased individuals.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the *sociocultural* tutorial presented the topic of racism as something embedded in the fabric of U.S. society. Rather than portray racism as widespread individual bias, it portrayed the pervasive nature of automatic racism as the tuning of the individual mind to ecologically inscribed associations and shared realities of racism (see Sinclair & Lun, Chapter 11, this volume). Rather than consider racism as an afterthought to a discussion of stereotyping and prejudice, it emphasized the key insight of stereotype threat research: how the oppressive impact of racism is not limited to cases of individual bias but also includes a “threat in the air” that harms motivation and performance even in the absence of biased treatment (Steele, 1997).

We then conducted two experiments—one online (Study 1) and the other in a classroom lecture setting (Study 2)—in which we randomly assigned white American participants to standard tutorial, sociocultural tutorial, or no-tutorial control conditions (Adams et al., 2008). After a few days, participants completed dependent measures. Results confirmed that participants in the sociocultural tutorial condition perceived greater racism in ambiguous events (e.g., the use of indigenous people as mascots by sports teams) and showed greater support for antiracist policies (e.g., reparations for slavery) than did participants in the other two conditions.

### *Representations of History*

Another manifestation of mind in context concerns the forms of historical knowledge that inform judgments about racism. In one paradigm, we have used a signal detection procedure to assess the relationship between knowledge of historically documented racist incidents (e.g., the Tuskegee Syphilis Study) (Freimuth et al., 2001) and perception of racism in ambiguous current events (e.g., high rates of poverty in African American communities) (Nelson, Adams, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2008; Salter, 2008). Results generally reveal that, regardless of race, perception of racism is positively related to accurate historical knowledge. However, white Americans score lower on the measure of histori-



cal accuracy than do black Americans, and this difference in knowledge of past racism partially accounts for group differences in perception of present racism in U.S. society.

In other research, we consider the consequences of engagement with different representations of the historical past. In one study, white American participants rated their familiarity with historical facts in one of three conditions: celebratory representations of black history that emphasize past achievements of black Americans, critical representations that emphasize past instances of racism, and mainstream representations of U.S. history that render people of African descent invisible. Participants exposed to critical representations not only perceived greater racism in U.S. society but also indicated greater support for policies designed to ameliorate racial inequality than did participants in the other two conditions (Salter & Adams, 2009).

### *Representations of American Identity*

Yet another instance of mind in context that underlies variability in perception of racism concerns different representations of American identity. In one project, we investigated representations of American identity that differ in ideology regarding the multiethnic nature of U.S. society (see Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). *Color-blind* representations of American identity deny racial and ethnic difference, and downplay the significance of ethnic and racial identity in U.S. society. In contrast, *multicultural* representations of American identity celebrate cultural differences and acknowledge the ongoing significance of ethnic and racial identity in U.S. society. We conducted both a correlational study, in which we measured endorsement of these representations (Phillips & Adams, 2009; Study 1), and an experiment in which we manipulated exposure to these representations (Phillips & Adams, 2009; Study 2). Across both studies, results indicated that color-blind representations of American identity were associated with greater strength of American identification and stronger denial of racism than were multicultural representations.

### *Implications for the Theme of “Mind in Context”*

The preceding discussion of research on racism denial illuminates the theme of “mind in context” in the sense of the top arrow of Figure 14.1: the cultural constitution of psychological experience. Rather than reflecting a coolly rational perception of objective reality, this research suggests that white American tendencies to perceive little racism in ambiguous events reflect structures of mind in context—including representations

of racism, history, and American identity—that promote a tendency to understate the impact of racism in U.S. society.

However, this discussion also hints at a more provocative sense of “mind in context” related to the idea of “mind in society.” Mainstream psychology takes it almost as given that whether the natural expression of genetically encoded instructions or the incorporation of ecologically represented structures, psychological processes happen inside individuals. In contrast, research on racism denial suggests the extent to which psychological processes also extend into the structure of everyday worlds. We consider this idea in relation to four psychological processes.

### *Memory*

Psychologists have typically studied memory as individual representation. Although some have investigated sociocultural influences on memory (see Bartlett, 1932; Wang & Ross, 2007), no less authoritative a source than the *Handbook of Social Psychology* locates its chapter on memory in a section titled “Intrapersonal Phenomena” (Smith, 1998). In contrast, a CP analysis suggests that one consider how memory also exists as ecological structures of mind in context (see Smith & Collins, Chapter 7, this volume). The ecological location of memory is particularly clear with respect to representations of history and collective memory (Wertsch, 2002). People do not have firsthand knowledge of past events; instead, their knowledge of the past comes from representations of history inscribed in cultural products (e.g., commemorative holidays, museums, official monuments, and textbooks) (Kurtiş, Adams, & Yellow Bird, in press; Loewen, 1999; Rowe, Wertsch, & Kosyaeva, 2002; Wertsch, 2002). However, the ecological location of memory is also evident in the apparently intrapersonal phenomenon of autobiographical memory. Rather than individual reconstruction, *autobiographical memory* is a joint product that people actively construct in collaboration with listeners through culturally embedded conversational practices and other structures of mind in context (e.g., Wang & Brockmeier, 2002).

### *Identity*

Given its link to memory, one can consider the extent to which identity is not merely limited to intrapersonal representations but also exists as ecological structures of mind in context inscribed in everyday cultural worlds. At the level of individual self, Pasupathi (2001) details how culturally saturated conversational practices influence the stories people tell about experiences, which in turn influence what they remember about those experiences and how they reconstruct personal identity. More gen-

erally, McAdams (2001) proposes a conception of personal identity as a *life story*: a psychosocial construction, “coauthored by the person . . . and the cultural context within which that person’s life is embedded and given meaning” (p. 101). Life stories are loosely based on biographical facts but go far beyond such facts as people integrate across diverse experiences to construct stories that make sense—both to themselves and to their audiences—according to culturally embedded narrative practices, understandings of the life course, and other ecological structures of mind in context (McAdams, 2001). These perspectives emphasize that personal identity is not simply a personal project but also rests on sociocultural structures of mind in context that provide ecological scaffolding for personal identity.

At the level of collective self, ecological structures of social identity include not only social representations of history (i.e., collective memory; Liu & Hilton, 2005), but also practices (“official” languages), artifacts (national flags), institutions (print media), and other structures of mind in context through which people imagine community with distant others (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995). These structures of mind in context are perhaps clearest in the case of national identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Despite similar etymological roots, *national* identities are not *natural*; rather, they are continually reconstructed in innumerable acts of banal nationalism (e.g., reproducing national boundaries by imposing them on satellite maps of weather patterns; Billig, 1995). More generally, people actively coauthor a sense of racial/ethnic, gender, and other social identities based partly on not only biographical “facts” (e.g., skin color or particular genitalia), but also social representations of identity and other structures of mind in context (Duveen, 2001; Philogene, 2001). Different representations of identity—icons like *Chief Wahoo* or Disney’s *Pocahontas*, labels like *First Nations* or *Indian*—are not superficially different versions of the same thing; instead, they constitute somewhat different realities that have divergent implications for everyday experience (Adams, Fryberg, Garcia, & Delgado-Torres, 2006; Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2005). Research comparing effects of color-blind versus multicultural representations of American identity on racism perception is an example of this idea (Phillips & Adams, 2009; see preceding section).

### *Motivation*

As the link between memory and identity suggests, memory processes are subject to ego-defensive motivational pressures. At the level of individual self, people remember their life story in ways that reflect and promote positive personal identity (e.g., Wilson & Ross, 2003). At the level

of collective self, people remember historical events in ways that reflect and promote positive social identities (Sahdra & Ross, 2007; Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006). A CP analysis adds to these observations by illuminating implications for the idea of mind in context. When people act based on preferences for identity-enhancing versions of the past, they reinscribe identity-enhancing representations of history in everyday worlds (i.e., the process represented by the bottom arrow of Figure 14.1). In other words, they produce ecological structures of motivation in context that bear traces of their understandings and desires.

This idea is evident in an investigation of displays for Black History Month (BHM) in Kansas City area schools (Salter & Adams, 2009). In one study, we observed that schools with majority white populations were more likely than schools with majority black populations (1) to use commercially available, “prepackaged” BHM displays; (2) to link BHM to larger issues of cultural diversity rather than civil rights; and (3) to deemphasize struggles against racism. Evidence from a second study suggests that these differences were not coincidental. When we exposed white American undergraduates to photographs of these BHM displays, they rated displays from majority-white schools to be more attractive and more familiar than the displays from majority-black schools. Briefly stated, these results suggest that the ecologies of memory and identity characteristic of the majority-white schools were not accidental, but instead resonated with white American preferences and motivations.

There is a small but potentially powerful way in which a discussion of motivation as mind in context differs from the preceding discussion of memory and identity. In the case of memory and identity, one might argue—consistent with the reductionist and individualist roots of social psychology (see Farr, 1996)—that associated structures of mind in context are, at most, external storage of psychological content. People may draw upon these external stores in the process of remembering and constructing identity, but (the argument goes) the processes of memory and identity per se occur within individual minds.

Although one can dispute this reductionist interpretation even in the case of memory and identity (see Wertsch, 2002), its inadequacy is especially clear in the case of motivation. To illustrate, consider a person confronted with judgments about possible racism in U.S. society. Even if she manages to approach the judgments in a nondefensive fashion, she must nevertheless draw upon mainstream representations of history and other ecologically inscribed structures of collective memory. Informed by these ecological structures of memory, she is likely to conclude that racism plays little role. Yet the question remains: To what extent was her judgment the product of defensive motivations? In contrast to the standard analysis of motivation as an individual process, a CP analysis suggests that even if the woman managed to set aside ego-defensive motiva-

tions and evaluated evidence in an evenhanded fashion, her judgment is nevertheless motivated to the extent that the ecological structures of collective memory (also known as representations of history) that inform her judgment bear the identity-enhancing desires of the people who reproduced them (and silence other, more damning representations; Cohen, 2001). In other words, the motivational forces that inform her judgment are not reducible to an individual motivation to deny racism. Instead, these motivational forces reside outside her individual subjectivity, inscribed and objectified in everyday worlds as ecological structures of memory and identity that promote collectively “desired” action.

### *Intention*

When we design courses that portray racism as individual bias (Adams et al., 2008; Pickett, 2007) or recount celebratory versions of history (Salter & Adams, 2009; see Loewen, 1995), we may not intend to promote denial of racism or opposition to corrective policy. Even so, our behavior reinscribes structures of mind in context that—regardless of our individual intentions—promote these outcomes. Reflecting the bottom arrow of Figure 14.1, people reproduce cultural worlds (e.g., psychology lectures about prejudice or BHM bulletin boards) that infuse their particular understandings and desires into everyday reality. Reflecting the top arrow of Figure 14.1, these ecological structures of mind in context subsequently afford denial of racism and opposition to corrective policy, even among people who might self-consciously intend otherwise.

In CP terms, one can say that atomistic constructions of racism or celebratory constructions of history constitute *intentional worlds* (Shweder, 1990): ecological structures of mind in context that systematically direct experience toward particular ends. As in the discussion of motivation, the *intention* in “intentional worlds” need not reside in the individual subjectivity of the person reciting atomistic definitions of racism or reproducing celebratory constructions of history (as in the case of kids playing with plastic “cowboys and Indians”; see Yellow Bird, 2004). Instead, the intention exists as a psychological trace, implicit in the behavioral sediment that previous waves of actors have deposited into everyday cultural worlds.

## **CONCLUSION: MIND IN CONTEXT AS INTENTIONAL WORLDS**

The concept of intentional worlds provides a powerful way to think about the theme of mind in context. Ecological perspectives and discussions of automaticity have highlighted the extent to which features of everyday

worlds structure experience, typically outside of individual awareness (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; McArthur & Baron, 1983). However, these perspectives have tended to talk about everyday worlds as natural facts that are more or less independent of human agency. In other words, these perspectives have emphasized one sense of “mind in context”: the extent to which the structures of mind in brain come to *reflect* the structure of everyday worlds. However, they typically have not emphasized the idea of “mind in society”: how mind not only reflects but also *resides in* the structure of everyday worlds (Heft, 2007; Hodges & Baron, 2007).

In contrast, a CP perspective highlights the *intentional* character of everyday worlds: not necessarily in the sense of “consciously or purposefully designed” (although, as with formal education systems, this is often so; see Cheney, 1987), but instead in the sense of “directive.” Reflecting the bottom arrow of Figure 14.1, this intentional character means that everyday worlds are not just natural. Instead, they are human products, constituted by layers of behavioral sediment that bear the understandings, desires, and other psychological traces of their (re)producers. Reflecting the top arrow of Figure 14.1, this intentional character means that everyday worlds are not neutral. Instead, they carry a psychological charge that influences experience toward particular ends, regardless of whether their producers intend to imbue them with any charge.

In keeping with the individualist and reductionist roots of the science, we social psychologists have tended to be wary of talk about collective manifestations of mind. Instead, we have typically retreated to atomistic philosophical positions that portray social-psychological phenomena as the aggregate of separate individual experience.<sup>4</sup> Although this portrayal distorts understanding of psychological functioning in general, it is clearly inadequate for understanding phenomena such as GSP episodes, the motivated nature of racism denial, and the racism inherent in mainstream representations of American history. These phenomena require the more collective notion of mind associated with the concept of intentional worlds—not as a metaphysically dubious, superordinate entity with its own subjectivity and consciousness but instead as psychological traces of behavior deposited in everyday worlds as ecological structures of mind in context. Conceived in this way, the notion of mind in context promises a truly social psychology that escapes the constraints of ontological and epistemological individualism.

## NOTES

1. The most recent case to receive attention in Western media was an outbreak of GSP in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in April 2008 (Bavier, 2008). Besides the similarity of reported cases to those that we describe in this chap-

ter, a remarkable feature of these reports—for example, the fact that they appeared in forums, such as the section of the Reuters website named “Oddly Enough”—is the extent to which they reproduced stereotypes of primitive superstition and otherness. The incidents even figured prominently on the Comedy Central television network news production, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (April 28, 2008), where an attitude of ridicule coexisted with (self-) censure for the attitude of ridicule: “We mentioned a big story coming out of the Congo—no, not the ongoing, Civil War–based, horrific violence—I am talking about something causing a much bigger international uproar. . . . There is a penis theft panic in the Congo!”

2. Although apparently an intrapersonal process, it is important to emphasize its collective nature. The self-fulfilling power of penis-shrinking belief to create its own behavioral reality is greatest in settings in which the structures of mind in context associated with the belief are or have become strong.
3. This atomistic conception is evident in the titles of textbook chapters and psychology courses that deal with racism and oppression. For example, an online survey of instructors for undergraduate social psychology courses (Pickett, 2007) revealed that the titles of units relevant to racism and oppression overwhelmingly referred to prejudice (95%), stereotypes or stereotyping (46%), and discrimination (33%). No titles included the terms *race* or *racism*. Likewise, the same survey revealed that instructors’ definitions of racism most commonly referred to discrimination (53%), prejudice (34%), attitudes (32%), and stereotyping (32%). Only a few respondents (11%) referred to collective or institutional forms of racism.
4. For extended discussions of ideas in this paragraph, see Farr (1996) and Stryker (1997).

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