Awareness Contexts and Social Interaction
Author(s): Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss
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evocative and integrative force. Although contract was an important legal notion from an early period in Anglo-American law, it came into its own as a cultural symbol only after the heyday of 18th century contractualism in political theory. To 19th century courts contract symbolized an ideal way of ordering private arrangements, and this symbolism shed a benign light on decisions upholding dubiously free private bargains. Today contract has lost its hold upon the legal imagination, with important results both in and out of the law.

A sociologist attempting to investigate the cultural significance of industrial, political, military, or educational activity would get very little help from contemporary concepts of culture. But he would intuitively grasp the need for a selective approach and one that would appraise the symbolic significance of work, politics, war, or education. It is one thing to consider how different technologies affect worker morale. It is another to ask: What role has the assembly line played as a symbol of industrial organization? It is one thing to study the contribution of low levels of political participation to the stability of the political order. It is another to ask: How many voters see politics as a mode of self-expression, with concomitant demands that political

programs conform to an appropriate symbolic imagery? Can we expect more of this in times of affluence, when people can "afford" the luxury of symbolic expression in politics? These questions suggest the selective emphasis of the sociology of culture.

Our emphasis on expressive symbolism in no way detracts from the chief pedagogical value of the older anthropological concept—the idea that culture is determining and that men are "culture-bound." To participate in culture is to be implicated in a system of symbolic meanings. The content of that system, and its quality, obviously make a difference for the way men think and behave. The symbolic meanings of culture become part of mind and self and this is the chief source of culture-boundedness. It may be argued, indeed, that the interpretation of culture as expressive symbolism only sharpens the insight and heightens the relevance of the traditional analyst of culture. At the same time, a better theoretical foundation is suggested for the study of change and variation in the *degree* of culture-boundedness and in the significance of cultural determinism for the integrity of the self. The study of cultural particularity is not an end in itself but an avenue to fundamental knowledge regarding man as a moral and psychic being.

AWARENESS CONTEXTS AND SOCIAL INTERACTION *

BARNEY G. GLASER AND ANSELM L. STRAUSS

University of California Medical Center, San Francisco

This paper presents a definition and typology of "awareness contexts" and offers a paradigm for their study. The paradigm emphasizes the developmental interaction processes deriving from given awareness contexts, and directs attention to transformations of those contexts. The writings of four sociologists are located within the paradigm with respect to the types of awareness context they assume and the segments of the paradigm they treat. Implications of the paradigm for future research and theory are discussed.

WHEN men confront each other, each cannot always be certain—even when given seemingly trustworthy guarantees—that he knows either the other's

identity or his own identity in the eyes of the other. An honest citizen may be taken in

by a confidence man, a government official by a foreign spy passing as his secretary, or a dying patient by his doctor. But the confidence man's mark may actually be from the local detective squad; the official, suspecting undercover play, may be pretending innocence while slipping the secretary false documents; and the dying patient may suspect his true condition but not reveal his suspicion to the physician. Thus, who is really being "taken in" is a matter of the awareness of both parties to the situation.

The phenomenon of awareness—which is central to the study of interaction—can be quite complex for at least two reasons. First, interaction may involve not merely two persons, but a third or quite a few more. For instance, when a homosexual flashes cues to another homosexual in the presence of many straight people, some may not notice and others may misread the cues, while others might be aware of their intended meaning. The identity of the homosexual is, therefore, unknown or suspect to some straights and known to still others. Conversely, a homosexual cannot always be certain who suspects or who is or is not aware of his true identity. Second, each person involved may be the representative of a system with specific requirements for, and perhaps a high stake in, how the person manages his own and the other's identity. Spies and counterspies are linked to such systems as often as are doctors and nurses.

These considerations highlight important features of the relation between interaction and awareness. To establish our basic notions, however, we shall content ourselves in this paper with the least complex situation: two interactants (whether persons or groups) who face the dual problem of being certain about both their identity in the other's eyes and the other's identity.

CONTEXTS OF AWARENESS

By the term *awareness context* we mean the total combination of what each interactant in a situation knows about the identity of the other and his own identity in the eyes of the other.[1] This total awareness is

the context within which are guided successive interactions between the two persons over periods of time—long or short. Empirically the question of true identity may focus only on that of one of the two persons (the dying patient) or on that of both persons (spy and counter-spy).

We have singled out four types of awareness context for special consideration since they have proved useful in accounting for different types of interaction. An *open* awareness context obtains when each interactant is aware of the other's true identity and his own identity in the eyes of the other. A *closed* awareness context obtains when one interactant does not know either the other's identity or the other's view of his identity. A *suspicion* awareness context is a modification of the closed one: one interactant suspects the true identity of the other or the other's view of his own identity, or both. A *pretense* awareness context is a modification of the open one: both interactants are fully aware but pretend not to be.

These types illustrate how the sociologist's total picture may differ from that held by each interactant, no matter how well informed or expert. For example, a doctor may state that a patient does not yet know that he is dying (his identity in the eyes of the doctor) while the patient may very well suspect the physician's definition. Thus, the doctor believes that closed awareness obtains when actually there is a suspicion context within which the patient is testing his suspicions. If the doctor recognizes those suspicions he may attempt to parry them. If

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[1] The concept of awareness context is a structural unit, not a property of one of the standard structural units such as group, organization, community, role, position, etc. By "context" we mean it is a structural unit of an encompassing order larger than the other unit under focus: interaction. Thus, an awareness context surrounds and affects the interaction. Much as one might say that the interaction of staff with dying patients occurs within the context of a cancer ward or a veteran's hospital, one can also say that this interaction occurs within a type of awareness context. Note that ward or hospital are concrete, conventional social units, while awareness context is an analytic social unit, constructed to account for similarities in interaction in many diverse conventional units.

A more general definition of awareness context is the total combination of what specific people, groups, organizations, communities or nations know what about a specific issue. Thus, this structural concept can be used for the study of virtually any problem entailing awareness at any structural level of analysis.

the doctor believes himself sucessful, he may only report to the sociologist that as yet the patient is unaware, neglecting to mention the patient's suspicions. Therefore, delimiting an awareness context requires always that the sociologist ascertain independently the awareness of each interactant. The safest method is to obtain data, through observation or interview, from each interactant on his own state of awareness. To accept the word of only one informant is risky, even perhaps for the open awareness context.

The successive interactions occurring within each type of context tend to transform the context. As yet it is an empirical question as to the direction in which a change in one context will lead, or what are some patterns of successive transformations. Thus, a closed context can be shattered by arousing suspicions; but if suspicions are quelled, the closed context is reinstituted. If suspicions are validated, the context may change to either pretense or open awareness. With a change in identity of one interactant in the eyes of the other, an open context can easily become either closed or pretense. For instance, the government official who suspects that his secretary is a spy must now check his suspicions. If he discovers that she is a spy but does not reveal his knowledge, then she in turn misreads his view of her identity. Thus, a closed context now obtains! If she in turn surreptitiously learns of his new view of her but says nothing, the context is again closed. But if he unmasks her spying, then the context now becomes open, since each now fully acknowledges the other's true identity.

How long each context will last before it is transformed is also an empirical question. In the abstract none is inherently less stable than another; although within a given substantive area, differential degrees of stability may become apparent. For dying patients, a suspicion context is probably the least stable, becoming resolved by successive interactions with staff which confirm the patient's suspicions.

A PARADIGM FOR THE STUDY
OF AWARENESS CONTEXTS

To organize a study of interaction within different awareness contexts, we have de-

veloped a paradigm or set of directives. These directives focus on the study of developmental interaction process—interaction that changes as it continues—as distinct from the relatively static study of the rules that govern interaction.[2]

The component parts of the paradigm are as follows: (1) a description of the given type of awareness context; (2) the structural conditions under which the awareness context exists;[3] (3) the consequent interaction; (4) changes of interaction that occasion transformations of context, along with the structural conditions for the transformations; (5) the tactics of various interactants as they attempt to manage changes of awareness context; and (6) some consequences of the initial awareness context, its transformation and associated interactions—for interactants and for the organizations or institutions notably affected.

To illustrate the use of this paradigm, we briefly sketch the closed awareness context surrounding dying patients.

(1) Hospitalized patients frequently do not recognize their impending death while staff does.[4] Thus interaction between staff and patient occurs within a closed awareness context about the patient's true identity.

(2) At least four major structural conditions determine this closed awareness context. First, most patients are not especially experienced at recognizing the signs of impending death. Second, the hospital is magnificently organized, both by accident and design, for hiding the medical truth from

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[2] Cf. Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places,* New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.

[3] We use the phrase "structural conditions" to emphasize that the conditions are conceived of as properties of social structural units. These units may vary from the smallest (such as role, status, or relationship) to the largest (such as organization, community, nation or society) and may be either larger or smaller than the unit of discussion. Usually they are larger contextual units. Structural conditions tend to have a determining or guiding effect on the unit of discussion. Since structural conditions are the tools-in-trade of most sociologists, this footnote is not meant for them. The structural conditions under which interaction takes place, however, are not typically included in the work of social psychologists, especially those trained in departments of psychology.

[4] We shall assume that the staff members all share the same awareness and that the staff's definition of a patient's identity (dying) is correct.

the patient. Records are kept out of reach. Staff is skilled at withholding information from him. Medical talk about him occurs generally in far-removed places. Also, the staff is trained or accustomed to act collusively around patients so as not to disclose medical secrets. Third, physicians are supported in their withholding of information by professional rationales: "Why deny them all hope by telling them they are dying?" Fourth, ordinarily the patient has no allies who can help him discover the staff's secret: even his family or other patients will withhold such information if privy to it.

(3) To prevent the patient's comprehension of the truth, the personnel utilize a number of "situation as normal" interaction tactics. They seek to act in his presence as if he were not dying but only ill. They talk to him as if he were going to live. They converse about his future, thus enhancing his belief that he will regain his health. They tell him stories about others (including themselves) who have recovered from similar or worse illnesses. By such indirect signaling they offer him a false biography. Of course, they may directly assure him that he will live, lying with a clear purpose.

To supplement these tactics the staff members use additional ones to guard against disclosure. They carefully guard against the patient's overhearing any conversation about his real condition. They engage also in careful management of expressions, controlling their facial and other gestures so as not to give the show away: [5] they must control the expression of any sadness they experience over the patient's approaching death. Almost inevitably they attempt, not always consciously, to reduce the number of potentially disclosing cues by reducing time spent with the patient or by restricting their conversations with him.

(4) In such collusive games, the teamwork can be phenomenal but the dangers of disclosure to the patient are very great. Unless the patient dies quickly or becomes permanently comatose, the patient tends to suspect or even clearly understand how

others identify him. Patients do overhear occasional conversations about themselves. Personnel unwittingly may flash cues or make conversational errors, which arouse the patient's suspicions. Day and night staff may give him contradictory information or divergent clues. The frequent practice of rotating personnel through the hospital services, or adding new personnel, may add to the danger of disclosure. The patient himself may become more knowledgeable about what is going on around him after some days in the hospital, or after repeated hospitalizations. Eventually he may also understand that the hospital is organized not to give him all the information about his condition but rather to withhold most information. He therefore takes what is told him with a grain of salt and some distrust of its accuracy. In short, the original structural conditions that sustain closed awareness begin to disappear, or are counteracted by new structural conditions that make for suspicion or open awareness. This is true even when the patient's symptoms do not badly worsen, but when he does turn worse this may cause him to ask new questions about his illness, which staff members need to handle cannily to keep from him their knowledge that he is dying.

(5) Some interactants may wish to move him along into other types of awareness context. If so, they can employ certain interactional tactics which are, for the most part, merely the opposites of the non-disclosure tactics. Intentionally, a staff member may give the show away wholly or partly, by improper management of face, by carefully oblique phrasing of words, by merely failing to reassure the patient sufficiently about a hopeful prognosis, by changing all talk about the future into concentration upon the present, or by increasing avoidance both of conversation and the patient himself. Of course, personnel occasionally may just plain tell him that he is dying.

(6) The closed awareness that "surrounds" the dying patient has many significant consequences for patient and staff. The patient, unaware of the other's view of his identity, cannot act as if he were aware of dying. Thus, he cannot talk to close kin about his fate. He cannot assuage their grief. Nor can he act toward himself as if he were

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[5] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Edinburgh, Scotland: University of Edinburgh, 1956; see also the Anchor edition.

dying, by facing his expected death grace-fully—or with panic and hysteria.

The kinsmen and hospital personnel are saved from certain stressful scenes that accompany open awareness about death, but they are also blocked from participating in various satisfying rituals of passage to death. Wives cannot openly take farewells of husbands; personnel cannot share the patient's sometimes ennobling acceptance of death. A profound consequence for the hospital itself, as well as for staff, of the closed awareness context is an interesting division of labor wherein nurses carry the brunt of stressful verbal interaction during which dying and death talk must be avoided. The physicians escape much of this stress since only brief visits are required for patients seemingly on the mend, hence talk is held to a minimum. Moreover, the climate of certain hospital services would be quite different (usually less oppressive) if closed awareness contexts were completely absent —as they are on certain special types of hospital wards.[6]

PREVIOUS ANALYSES OF INTERACTION

The notion of awareness context is useful for understanding other theoretical approaches to awareness as it relates to social interaction. Our paradigm for the study of interaction within awareness contexts may be used to locate, in a single scheme, the diverse aspects of awareness and social interaction attended to in sociological writings. To illustrate this application of both concept and paradigm, we shall discuss the theoretical work of George H. Mead and Erving Goffman as well as the researches of Donald Roy and Fred Davis. Rather than assess their work *per se,* we shall discuss the writings of these men as good examples of the current state of theory and research about social interaction.

GEORGE H. MEAD: Mead's concern with social interaction was secondary to a lifetime preoccupation with the problems of social order and its orderly change. We interpret his analysis of interaction—also his writing about communication and

thought—as bearing principally on an open awareness context. In a well known passage he wrote that: "In short, the conscious or significant conversation of gestures is a much more adequate and effective mechanism of mutual adjustment within the social act—involving, as it does, the taking, by each of the individuals carrying it on, the attitudes of the others toward himself—than is the unconscious or non-significant conversation of gestures." [7] For Mead, "awareness" was essentially an *accurate* awareness of of how one's own gesture (vocal or otherwise) was being defined by others, followed by further action based on that awareness. Thus: "That process . . . of responding to one's self as another responds to it, taking part in one's own conversations with others, being aware of what one is saying and using that awareness of what one is saying to determine what one is going to say thereafter—that is a process with which we are all familiar" (p. 217). This perceptive social philosopher gave his readers a rich but highly generalized analysis of that universal situation in which men genuinely and openly communicate.

Mead was not always consistently concerned with shared communication but—as the preceding quotations suggest—also with how one guesses the other's perception of his behavior so as further to direct that behavior oneself. Whether on the basis of these guesses one then misleads the other or plays the game honestly is left ambiguous. Presumably Mead meant the ensuing interaction to be genuinely open and cooperative.[8] The full force of our commentary on this aspect of his work is best demonstrated by an unusual passage wherein Mead raises and dismisses those aspects of interaction that do not involve shared symbolization. He remarks:

There is, of course, a great deal in one's con-

[6] Cf. Renée Fox, *Experiment Perilous,* Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959.

[7] Anselm Strauss (ed.), *The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 173. All references are to this volume.

[8] Herbert Blumer, in pointing to the great value of Mead's approach, has also emphasized concerted action, whether accomplished or developed. See Blumer's "Society as Symbolic Interaction" in Arnold Rose (ed.), *Human Behavior and Social Processes,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962, esp. pp. 187–188.

versation with others that does not arouse in one's self the same response it arouses in others. That is particularly true in the case of emotional attitudes. One tries to bully somebody else; he is not trying to bully himself. . . . We do at times act and consider just what the effect of our attitude is going to be, and we may deliberately use a certain tone of voice to bring about a certain result. Such a tone arouses the same response in ourselves that we want to arouse in somebody else. But a very large part of what goes on in speech has not this . . . status.

It is the task not only of the actor but of the artist as well to find the sort of expression that will arouse in others what is going on in himself . . . the stimulus calls out in the artist that which it calls out on the other, but this is not the natural function of language. . . ." (pp. 224–226).

And what is the natural function of language? "What is essential to communication is that the symbol should arouse in one's self what it arouses in the other individual." Mead seems here to touch on interaction based on something different from open awareness and genuine communication. In deliberate bullying, for example, one's activity may frighten the other but does not frighten oneself. In writing poetry, one finds the means to arouse responses in others what one finds in himself (and Mead remarks that Wordsworth took some years to turn those immediate responses into poetry). And in this same passage, Mead notes that "we do not assume that the person who is angry is calling out the fear in himself that he is calling out in someone else;" that is, in this spontaneous expression of feeling, actor and audience do not respond identically. We should not be surprised to find, sandwiched within this passage, Mead's laconic comment that though we can act— quite like the actor does—"It is not a natural situation; one is not an actor all of the time." Of course no one is! But what about the times when we do act?

Mead's analysis is especially pertinent to this paper because it emphasizes a property of interaction so often absent in other men's work: the developmental properties of interaction. In Mead's writing the concept of significant symbol not only underscores the consensual character of social order but also shows how social order is changed— how social objects are formed and trans-

formed during the course of constructed acts. In current reading of Mead, this developmental aspect tends to be overlooked; so does his processual, rather than substantial, treatment of the self. The self as process insures that interaction is usually not static or merely repetitive. In Mead's world, acts are open-ended, frequently surprising to the actors themselves. And in some of his finest writings Mead emphasizes how even past events are reconstructed, powerfully influencing the directions taken by present events. In short, interaction always tends to go somewhere, but exactly where is not always known for certain by the interactants.

ERVING GOFFMAN: Erving Goffman's work is probably the most influential among current theoretical analyses of interaction. If he does not stand at an opposite pole from Mead, he surely stands far removed— in style, temperament, theoretical perspective, and above all in his focus on the interplay of people. In his first book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*,[9] one can easily follow his detailed, central analysis of interaction.

From the beginning, Goffman emphasizes an audience's need to define an individual's identity. "When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed" (p. 2). Whether or not an actor wishes, his actions yield impressions of him to his audiences. Therefore, people most frequently "devote their efforts to the creation of desired impressions" rather than act completely without guile or contrivance. "Engineering a convincing impression" is an inescapable fact (p. 162). It is a way for each interactant "to control the conduct of others" (p. 2).

Because of such impression management, "events may occur within the interaction which contradict, discredit, or otherwise throw doubt upon the actor's projection of himself." Much of Goffman's book turns around the confusion or embarrassment that occurs when interaction is thus disrupted. He analyzes extensively the "preventive

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[9] All references are to the original Edinburgh edition.

practices" consequent upon disruptions: "defensively by the actor himself, and protectively when the audience strives to save the definition of the situation projected by another" (p. 7).

In all of this, Goffman focuses on closed awareness. He has a section on "team collusion" (pp. 112–120), and another on the "maintance of expressive control" (pp. 33–37). Second, he explicitly treats pretense awareness contexts. For instance, "each team tends to suppress its candid view of itself and of the other team, projecting a conception of self and a conception of other that is relatively acceptable to the other. And to insure that communication will follow established, narrow channels, each team is prepared to assist the other team, tacitly and tactfully, in maintaining the impression it is attempting to foster" (page 107).[10] In general, Goffman, at least in this volume, is uninterested in open awareness contexts; and though he touches on contexts where audiences are suspicious of the actor's projected definition, he does not go into the ways in which the suspicion gradually grows and then is validated.

But whether pretense or closed awareness is at issue, Goffman's principal focus is on how the interaction is kept going, or if disrupted, how interactants manage to get it going again. He has little interest in awareness contexts that are transformed through the deliberate operations of the interactants or through the continued course of the interaction itself. Indeed, his analysis is geared to episodic or repeated interactions rather than to sustained interplay. Consistently with this non-developmental focus, his dramaturgical model refers to the *team* of stage actors who night after night seek to create an acceptable illusion, rather than to the *drama* itself, with its plot line and evolving, relatively unpredictable, sequence of transactions.[11] Particularly it is

worth underscoring that the identity of Goffman's actor is rarely problematical to himself, but only and always to his audience.[12]

In this book Goffman tends to leave implicit the structural conditions imposed by the larger social unit. Rather, he focuses mainly on situational conditions such as setting and front and back regions. Of course, most interaction in *The Presentation of Self* occurs in establishments containing service personnel and clients, insiders and outsiders; that is, persons who are either relatively unknown to each other or respectively withhold significant aspects of their private lives from each other. Goffman leaves to his readers the task of considering what kinds of structural conditions might lead to interactions quite different from those described. For example, his discussions of impression management might have been very different had he studied neighborhood blocks, small towns, or families, where participants are relatively well known to each other. Similarly, he is not much concerned with systematically tracing various consequences of the interaction (especially for larger social units); although for interactants, of course, consequences are noted in terms of specific linkages with the disruption or smooth continuance of encounters.

Aside from its restricted range of awareness contexts, Goffman's world of interaction is non-developmental and rather static. In other writings, he is concerned with interaction of considerable duration, but characteristically his interest is in the rules that govern that interaction. Often interaction proceeds to its termination almost as inexorably as a Greek tragedy.[13] For these aspects, however, his analysis is a considerable advance beyond those of his predecessors.

Next we re-examine two useful papers, our aim being first, to locate the reported research within our awareness paradigm; second, to assess its contribution to interactional analysis; and third, to suggest what might be added to that analysis if one were now to undertake such research.

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[10] This passage is a pretty fair description of the situation in which a dying patient and his nurses both engage in pretense by delicately avoiding talk about the patient's impending death.

[11] Many readers seemed to have missed this point. Cf. a similar comment in Sheldon Messinger, Harold Sampson and Robert Towne, "Life as Theater: Some Notes on the Dramaturgic Approach to Social Reality," *Sociometry*, 25 (March, 1962), p. 108.

[12] To Goffman, surprise means potential disruption of interaction—as compared with Mead's notion of the creative and surprising impulsivity of the "I."

[13] Cf. Messinger, *et al., op. cit.*

DONALD ROY: In his "Efficiency and 'The Fix': Informal Intergroup Relations in a Piecework Machine Shop,"[14] Roy is interested in demonstrating "that the interaction of two groups in an industrial organization takes place within and is conditioned by a larger intergroup network of reciprocal influences." The interaction is a contest between management and the workers. The latter adroitly scheme, connive and invent methods for attaining quotas set by management; while management attempts to minimize the success of these "black arts of 'making out.'" These arts "were not only responses to challenge from management but also stimulations, in circular interaction, to the development of more effective countermagic in the timing process" established by management's timecheckers. An important segment of Roy's discussion deals with "intergroup collusion" among workers from other departments, who become allies in this unending contest with management.

Where shall we locate Roy's research in our awareness context paradigm? From Roy's description, the awareness contexts are not entirely clear since we do not always know the extent to which management was aware of what was going on among the workers. But in general, workers' attempts to keep closed awareness about their specific collusive games seem to have alternated with management's periodic awareness of such games. Whether this periodic awareness of management transformed the closed context temporarily into pretense or open awareness is difficult to determine. Roy does, however, clearly give the structural conditions that permit both the closed awareness context and its periodic, temporary transformation to pretense or open before the workers reinstitute the closed context with a new collusive game.

Roy describes in great detail the interactional tactics of both sets of players which maintain, transform and reinstitute closed awareness. Teamwork on the worker's side is exceptionally well sketched. Managerial tactics, however, are described principally from "below," for two reasons. First, Roy

was doing field work as an industrial worker, and could scarcely be privy to management's specific perspectives and decisions. Second, he did not need to scrutinize management's views because his research was designed to explore how workers organized their work.

In spite of the fact that Roy describes the phases through which the contest, and hence the awareness context, oscillates, true temporal development is lacking. This is because he conceives of the interaction as unendingly the same. Apparently the limits of the interaction were set by the time period devoted to the research itself. As Roy himself notes in passing: "How far the beginning of the series [of new rules] antedated the writer's arrival is not known. Old-timers spoke of a 'Golden Age' enjoyed before the installation of the 'Booth System' of production control." An interest in interactional process must raise these questions: from what situation did the interaction phases develop, where did they end, and what happened if someone attempted to bring the collusive interaction out into the open?

The consequences of the interaction are noted sporadically—mainly in terms of work blockages and cumulative inefficiency —but again we might wish to know much more, especially about diverse consequences for the functioning of the organization at large.

FRED DAVIS: A very different presentation of interaction is Fred Davis' "Deviance Disavowal: The Management of Strained Interaction by the Visibly Handicapped."[15] The sub-title accurately describes what this paper is all about. The visible stigma of the handicapped person presents a threat to sociability which "is, at minimum, fourfold: its tendency to become an exclusive focal point of the interaction, its potential for inundating expressive boundaries, its discordance with other attributes of the person and, finally, its ambiguity as a predicator of joint activity." These are "contextual emergents which, depending on the particular situation, serve singly or in combination to strain the

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[14] *American Journal of Sociology*, 60 (November, 1954), pp. 255–266.

[15] *Social Problems*, 9 (Winter, 1961), pp. 120–132.

framework of normative rules and assumptions in which sociability develops."

After a discussion of these various emergents, which constitute a grave threat to interaction, we are shown "how socially adept handicapped persons cope with it so as to either keep it at bay, dissipate it or lessen its impact upon the interaction." The analysis is aimed at delineating "in transactional terms the stages through which a social relationship with a normal typically passes." The stages are: (1) fictional acceptance, (2) "breaking through" or facilitating normalized role-taking, and (3) institutionalization of the normalized relationship. From the viewpoint of the handicapped person, the "unfolding" of the stages represents deviance disavowal; from that of the normal person it is normalization. For each stage in the process, a certain number of interactional tactics are noted, though Davis is more interested in interactional stages than in the "tremendous variety of specific approaches, ploys and strategems that the visibly handicapped employ in social situations."

This research deals with the transformation of pretense awareness ("fictional acceptance") to open awareness ("institutionalization of the normalized relationship"), chiefly but not solely under the control of transforming operations by the handicapped. As Davis describes it, the handicapped person attempts first to keep interaction in the fictional mode (both interactants mutually aware of his stigma but neither acting as though it existed); then, gradually, the handicapped person engineers matters to a final phase where it is openly "fitting and safe to admit to certain incidental capacities, limits, and needs"—that is, where both parties may openly refer to the stigma of the handicapped person.

Davis' discussion is additionally rich because he makes some very explicit remarks about how difficult the open awareness (normalization) phase is for either party to maintain. For instance: "to integrate effectively a major claim to 'normalcy' with numerous minor waivers of the same claim is a tricky feat and one which exposes the relationship to the many situational and psychic hazards of apparent duplicity. . . ." By implication, this relationship between the two parties has a future: because it is difficult to maintain, it cannot remain at a standstill. We say "by implication" because Davis is content to carry the story only to where something like normal sociability can take place. Said another way, Davis actually is analyzing a developmental—not merely an engineered—interaction situation. "As against the simplistic model of a compulsive deviant and a futile normalizer we would propose one in which it is postulated that both are likely to become engaged in making corrective interactional efforts toward healing the breach." Precisely because *both* are likely to make those correctional efforts, this is a developmental relationship. Our paradigm helps raise the questions of where the relationship is going and what further transformations, under what conditions, may occur.

Our pradigm also suggests focusing on both parties to the interplay even when it is relatively adeptly controlled by one, since our understanding of the relationship's developmental aspects necessarily requires knowledge of the actions and awareness of both parties. Thus, how does the normal interactant see the handicapped, and the interaction, at various phases of the interaction—and what is he doing, or deciding to do, about it? What will his tactics be, whether occassional or continual? Davis also assumes that the handicapped person has often been through this type of interaction—hence has evolved tactics for handling it—while the normal person is a novice. This may be so, but in actual life both players may have had similar experiences.

Lastly, Davis attempts to specify one class of structural conditions that permit the handicapped person to manage strained interaction. He begins his paper by referring to "that genre of everyday intercourse" which is characteristically face-to-face, not too prolonged but not too fleeting either, with a certain degree of intimacy, and "ritualized to the extent that all know in general what to expect but not so ritualized as to preclude spontaneity and the slightly novel turn of events." This explicit detailing is not a mere backdrop but an intrinsic part of the analysis of interaction in the presence of physical stigma. The consequnces of interaction (e.g., the satisfaction of both

parties and the possibility of a continuing relationship) are left mainly implicit.

GENERAL IMPLICATIONS OF PARADIGM

Our examination of these four writers indicates that future research and theory on interactional problems should encompass a far broader range of phenomena than heretofore. Of course, one need not do everything demanded by the paradigm. But it guides the researcher in exploring and perhaps extending the limits of his data, and in stating clearly what was done and left undone, perhaps adding why and why not. The paradigm helps the theorist achieve greater clarity, integration, and depth of analysis by encouraging reflection upon what he has chosen *not* to make explicit. It also raises questions about development and structure that a straight factor approach to the study of interaction typically does not: [16] how does one type of context lead to another; what are the structural conditions—including rules—in the relevant institutions that facilitate or impede existence of a context, and changes in it; what are the effects of a changing awareness context on the identity of a participant; why does one party wish to change a context while another wishes to maintain it or reinstate it; what are the various interactional tactics used to maintain or reinstate change; and what are the consequences for each party, as well as for sustaining institutional conditions?

This developmental focus helps to eliminate the static quality and restricted boundaries for analysis that are characteristic of the factor approach. The factor approach is useful only when the analyst is conscious of the location of his conceptual boundaries within a larger developmental, substantive scheme, and can thereby explain their relevance to his readers, rather than implicitly declaring all other substantive factors out

of bounds. Only then is it sensible to leave out so much that other sociologists, in the light of present theory and knowledge, recognize as relevant to the area under consideration.

The focus on structural conditions increases the likelihood that the microscopic analysis of interaction will take into account the nature of the larger social structure within which it occurs. The usual structural approach in sociology tends to neglect microscopic analysis of interaction and also inhibits attention to its developmental character. Our paradigm encompasses in one developmental scheme the twin, but often divorced, sociological concerns with social structure and social interaction. Neither need be slighted, or forgotten, for a focus on the other.

Our discussion has touched on only four possible types of awareness contexts: open, closed, pretense and suspicion. These four types are generated by the substantively relevant combinations of four variables found in our study of the literature and in our data on awareness of identity and interaction. We have considered two variables as dichotomous—*two interactants; acknowledgment of awareness* (pretense or no pretense)—and two as trichotomous—*degree of awareness* (aware, suspicious and unaware); and *identity* (other's identity, own identity, and own identity in the eyes of the other). Logical combination of these variables would yield 36 possible types, but to start research with all the logical combinations of these variables would be an unnecessarily complex task, considering that many or most types are empirically non-existent. Therefore, the procedure used to develop awareness context types related to interaction was first, to search data for relevant types; second, to logically substruct the variables involved; and third, on the basis of these variables to judge whether other possible types would be useful or necessary for handling the data.

Presumably, more empirically relevant types can be found by scrutinizing the sociological literature, one's own data, and one's own life.[17] Another implication of the pres-

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[16] The factor approach is a standard one in sociology: it is legitimated by the notion that one can only consider so much at one time with precision and clarity, and therefore boundaries must be chosen, usually according to one's interests, provided they are theoretically relevant. For a discussion of "simultaneous *versus* sequential" factor models, see Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders,* New York: The Free Press, 1963, pp. 22–25.

[17] We are working with the "unawareness" context, in which neither party knows the identity of the other or his identity in the others eyes. This is

ent analysis is that increasingly complex types of awareness contexts and their distinctive consequences should be systematically sought. We recommend our procedure for evolving types, as opposed to starting out with the full set of logical combinations, each of which must then be screened for empirical relevance.

We suggested, at the beginning of the paper, two factors that further complicate awareness contexts: additional people, and

illustrated by strangers meeting or passing each other on a dark street. If they stop to talk, the first task they are likely to engage in is to transform the "unawareness" context to facilitate interaction.

people representing organized systems with a stake in certain types of awareness context. Certain types of social phenomena are probably stategic for extending our knowledge of awareness contexts: for example, research discoveries in science and in industry, spy systems, deviant communities whose actions may be visible to "squares," types of bargaining before audiences, such as occurs in diplomatic negotiations, and unofficial reward systems like those depicted by Melville Dalton and Alvin Gouldner.[18]

[18] *Men Who Manage,* New York: Wiley, 1959; and *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy,* Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954, respectively.

REJECTION OF THE MENTALLY ILL: THE INFLUENCE OF BEHAVIOR AND SEX *

DEREK L. PHILLIPS

Dartmouth College

The effects of the behavior and the sex of four descriptions of mentally ill persons are examined to ascertain the relative importance of each in determining attitudes toward the mentally ill. The findings indicate that the visibility with which an indvidual deviates from socially prescribed behavior, rather than the pathology of the behavior from a mental-hygiene point of view, determines the strength of rejection. In addition, men are rejected more strongly than women exhibiting the same behavior.

THIS is the second of two papers presenting the results of a controlled experiment in influencing people's attitudes toward individuals exhibiting symptoms of mental illness. In the earlier paper the effects of *seeking help* for problems of mental illness were examined.[1] The findings indicated that individuals described as exhibiting identical behavior are increasingly rejected as they are described as seeking no help, consulting a clergyman, a physician, a psy-

[1] Derek L. Phillips, "Rejection: A Possible Consequence of Seeking Help for Mental Disorders," *American Sociological Review,* 29 (December, 1963), pp. 963–972.

chiatrist, or a mental hospital.[2] Although the "help-source" utilized was an important factor in rejection of the mentally ill, it was not as important a factor as the ill person's behavior.[3] Because my concern in the previous paper was with the possibility that individuals rejected for their behavior might be *further* rejected for seeking help, I did not discuss the influence of deviant behavior in determining rejection. In this paper I do examine the influence of behavior on rejection, as well as the importance of the actor's sex in determining how strongly he is rejected.

[2] This was true for each of the behaviors discussed in the following pages.

[3] For the relation between help-source and rejection, $F=23.53$ ($p<.001$), while for the relation between behavior and rejection, $F=64.52$ ($p<.001$).