Source : G J McCall & J L Simmons (1978) in "Identities and Interactions", The Free Press, New York, pp. 61-79.

Chapter 4

THE ROLE-IDENTITY MODEL

We have proposed that perhaps the most distinctive fact about man as a species is that he lives simultaneously in two very different worlds. On one hand, he is a quite ordinary mammal in an animalistic, physicalistic world where there are cold winds, empty bellies, offensive odors, the terror of darkness, and hostile animals of every kind. Man defecates, and his skin wrinkles, and he is as like as not to die of cancer.

But man is also a dreamer, an idealizing creature. As Santayana put it: "Man is certainly an animal that, when he lives at all, lives for ideals. Something must be found to occupy his imagination, to raise pleasure and pain into love and hatred, and change the prosaic alternative between comfort and discomfort into the tragic one between happiness and sorrow."[1] He is a brooding, introspective, sensitive, intensely self-conscious beast.

He is, to repeat, a dreamer. And each of us men dreams centrally about himself—both by day and by night.[2] Each is always *in* his

[1]George Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine* and *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1957, p. 6.

[2]See, for a sample of 10,000 cases, Calvin S. Hall, "What People Dream About," *Scientific American*, 1951, 184 (May): 60–63; and Hall, *The Meaning of Dreams*, New York: Harper, 1953. Also see Edwin Diamond, *The Science of Dreams*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962; Jerome L. Singer, *Daydreaming*,

own dreams and in fact can always be more easily identified in them than can anyone else. This fact is not merely incidental, for, in the peculiarly elusive reality of the dream world, the identities of the chimerical players are extremely hard to establish. We have all experienced this phenomenon in trying to recount our dreams in the morning. Characters whom, at the time, we seemed to recognize quite definitely turn into ghosts when we try to remember the dreams in our waking moments. Or, on analysis, a character in our dream turns out to be a strange composite of several people we know.

These problems of identification are by no means limited to dreams, although they no doubt attain their zenith of difficulty in that fantastic realm. We have argued, in Chapter 3, that identification of persons and of other "things" is the key to symbolic interaction; once things are identified and their meanings for us established, we can proceed with our individual strivings, but not before. Accordingly, we must consider more closely what is involved in this process of identifying things.

Identification, in the generic sense, consists of placing things in terms of systematically related categories.[3] One relevant set of related categories for identifying certain persons, for example, is the system of military ranks: private, corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, and general. By placing a given soldier somewhere in this system of categories, we have identified him in terms of rank. Identification in terms of broad social categories like military rank yields a person's *social identity*, as opposed to his *personal identity*, which is derived by identifying him in terms of a set of categories referring to unique individuals: categories like Sam Friedson of Pine Bluff, Arkansas; Henry Jones of Pitman, New Jersey; and the like. Personal identities serve as the pegs upon which social identities and personal biographies can be

New York: Random House, 1966; and Singer, *The Inner World of Daydreams*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

[3]For the best account of categorization and identification, see Jerome S. Bruner, Jacqueline J. Goodnow, and George A. Austin, *A Study of Thinking*, New York: Wiley, 1956, especially Chapters 1 and 2. For a fine application of these principles to the problems of human interaction, see Anselm Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks*, New York: Free Press, 1959, especially pp. 9–88.

hung.[4] If an individual could not be recognized from one occasion to another as the same person, no stable social relationships could be constructed, and therefore there would be no social identities at all. Both types of identification are vitally important in the process of human interaction.

As the reader will recall from our earlier discussions, we act toward things in terms of their implications for our plans of action, and therefore we have to discover the identity and meaning of every thing we encounter. For every plan of action, there is a classification of things in terms of their relevance to that plan. For the plan of "eating," for example, there is at the crudest level a classification of things into the broad dichotomous category set of "edible" and "inedible." (And, of course, for refinements of this basic plan, there are correspondingly refined classifications of things, ranging up through those constructed by gourmets and nutrition experts.)

Once one has properly placed some thing in such a system of categories, he knows how to act toward it from the perspective of the underlying plan of action. In this way, identification (as an act of categorization, placement, or naming) serves to release or inhibit certain acts toward things.

> It is just this future-oriented aspect of categorizing behavior in all organisms that impresses us most. It is not simply that organisms code the events of their environment into equivalence classes, but that they utilize cues for doing so that allow an opportunity for prior adjustment to the event identified. . . . Anticipatory categorizing, then, provides "lead time" for adjusting one's response to objects with which one must cope.[5]

As Bruner, *et al.*, point out, much of this categorizing on the part of lower animals takes place in terms of inborn categories,[6] whereas most of man's category systems are constructed or invented, to facilitate his greater repertory of plans of actions.

[4]These two types of identity and their interrelations receive important discussion in Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

[5]Bruner, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[6]*Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

In the case of identifying persons, these systematically related categories are referred to as *social positions* (or, by some authors, as "social statuses" or even as "social types").[7] A sprinkling of examples might include: wife, major general, third baseman, first violinist, Lutheran, Irishman, a Cabot, Fuller Brush man, "young man of great promise," plant manager, and the like. It is in terms of such categories that we place people in our identification of them.

By identifying persons we meet in terms of their social positions, we are afforded lead time in coping with them, for we may know what implications people in such positions have for our plans of action and we can modify our conduct accordingly. As some theorists have put it, we hold certain expectations toward the occupant of a given position, and these expectations exhibit a normative as well as an anticipatory aspect. The set of expectations held toward a given position is said to constitute the *social role* associated with occupancy of that position.[8] As suggested on pp. 6–7, this conception of "role" is in sharp contrast with our own.

The expectations that comprise a "social role" in this sense are entirely too vague, incomplete, and poorly specified in most instances to serve as genuine guides to action. The expectations held toward fathers, for example, are too ill defined to allow one either to act the part of a father or to predict in any detail the behavior of a specific father. Rather, they serve principally as very broad limits on the sort of behavior by fathers that will be approved, accepted, or tolerated by other people. The expectations or demands of a position are thus met by an astonishing variety of actual performances, which are judged as more or less appropriate to such a social position.

As we have argued earlier, the actual role-performance (or, as we shall call it here, the *interactive* role, as opposed to the *social* role) is not specified by the culture but is *improvised* to deal in

[7]See the review in Neal Gross, Ward S. Mason, and Alexander W. McEachern, *Explorations in Role Analysis,* New York: Wiley, 1958, pp. 11–20, 48–69. *Cf.* the concept of social type in Orrin E. Klapp, *Heroes, Villians, and Fools,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962, pp. 1–24.

[8]Gross, *et al., op. cit.,* pp. 11–20, 48–69.

some variable fashion with the broad demands of one's social position and one's character. Social position alone is not sufficient to specify role-behavior, for the demands of such a position are filtered through one's character or self-conception and are modified to blend with it.[9] The interactive role is a plausible line of action characteristic and expressive of the particular personality that happens to occupy the given position and represents that person's mode of coming to grips with the general expectations held toward someone in his position.[10]

ROLE-IDENTITIES

These considerations lead directly to our central concept, that of *role-identity,* which, in the dramaturgical language of Chapter 3, may be defined as the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position. More intuitively, such a role-identity is his imaginative view of himself *as he likes to think of himself being and acting* as an occupant of that position.[11]

This imaginative view of oneself in a position is usually rather idealized, incorporating standards of conduct and achievement that are unlikely to be consistently attained (or perhaps even approached) in the individual's actual day-to-day performances relevant to that role. Typically, this view of self is heavily freighted with all manner of more or less fantastic embellishments and exag-

[9]We are indebted to Michal M. McCall for suggesting this point in the present context. Compare also the related concept of "role-distance" in Goffman, *Encounters,* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961, pp. 83–152.

[10]This conception of role will be elaborated further in succeeding discussions, but hereafter when we employ the bare term "role" we shall generally be referring to interactive rather than social role. See Ralph H. Turner, "Role: Sociological Aspects," in David L. Sills, editor, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* New York: Macmillan, 1968, 13: 552–557.

[11]Research procedures for assessing role-identities are discussed on pp. 258–260. *Cf.* the conceptual treatment in George J. McCall, "The Social Looking-Glass: A Sociological Perspective on Self-Development," in Theodore Mischel, editor, *The Self: Psychological and Philosophical Issues,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1977, pp. 274–287.

gerations. The wealth of concrete detail that is included in these imaginations of self is astounding, ranging in many cases from fantasied heroic accomplishments and encounters right down to how one fancies he should posture and hold his head to communicate exactly the proper affect in a particularly dramatic engagement. This richness of imagery is not confined to exotic and merely aspired roles, as in the case of Walter Mitty,[12] but is typically encountered in people's thoughts of themselves in connection with their own mundane positions.[13]

These imaginations of self run heavily toward vicarious performances of the role in question. One imagines, and often actually play-acts in the inner forum, specific performances like writing a short story, building a boat in the basement, approaching the boss for a raise, asking the girl in study hall for a date, and catching one's limit of lunker bass on some faraway lake. An integral part of these imaginings is the reactions of other people to one's hypothetical performance: the look of envy by the office rival when he hears of one's promotion, the enthusiastic acclaim of one's newborn child by the girls at bridge club, and Mother's chagrin when she learns that her darling daughter has run off with that roguish scamp after all. Not all these other persons who figure in one's imaginary performances (as objects, accomplices, or audiences) are specific known persons, but perhaps most of them are. In this way, other persons—real, live individuals—are *built into* the very contents of one's role-identities.

As a consequence of these ties to specific persons and institutional contexts (like a particular company office), the content of a given role-identity continually changes as alters and institutions enter and pass out of the person's life stream.[14] Our imaginations

[12]James Thurber, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," in Thurber, *My World—And Welcome to It*, New York: Harcourt, 1942, pp. 72–81.

[13]Strauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–69; Alfred R. Lindesmith and Strauss, *Social Psychology* (rev. ed.), New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1956, pp. 206–212; and Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1959, pp. 4–6, 252–253; and Singer, *op. cit.*

[14]Such changes in the content of an identity will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Certain other types of change in contents are discussed on pp. 87–91 in this chapter.

of self reflect our interpersonal concerns[15] and tend to keep pace with our drift through this web of persons and associations.

Role-identities of this sort are not simply idle musings and entertaining daydreams; they exert important influences on daily life. In the first place, they serve as perhaps the primary source of plans of action. The vicarious performances that loom prominently in the substance of any role-identity serve as proving grounds and rehearsal halls for actual performances.[16] The imagined reactions of various others to these vicarious performances constitute important criteria for evaluating any possible plans of *overt* action similar in content to these vicarious performances.

Furthermore, the contents of a person's role-identities provide him with criteria for appraising his own actual performances. Those actions that are not consonant with one's imaginations of self as a person in a particular social position are regarded as embarrassing, threatening, and disconcerting; if possible, they will be discontinued and superseded by actions more in keeping with one's view of self.[17] Role-identities therefore constitute an important set of those perspectives or frames of reference for appraising one's thoughts and actions that we have previously called the "me."[18] In musing upon our role-identities we stimulate ourselves to smile, to frown, to become angry. Our whole daily routine is colored and embellished by them.

In fact, they give the very *meaning* to our daily routine, for they largely determine our interpretations of the situations, events, and other people we encounter. By providing us with plans of action and systems of classification, our role-identities go far to determine the objects of our environment, their identity and meaning.

[15]*Cf.* the somewhat clouded "looking-glass self." Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (rev. ed.), New York: Scribner's, 1922, pp. 183–185; and G. J. McCall, *op. cit.*

[16]Strauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–69; Lindesmith and Strauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–212; Singer, *op. cit.*; and Eric Klinger, *The Structure and Functions of Fantasy*, New York: Wiley, 1971.

[17]Edward Gross and Gregory P. Stone, "Embarrassment and the Analysis of Role Requirements," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1964, 70: 1–15.

[18]*Cf.* pp. 52–54.

This is particularly true of persons as objects, both ourselves and others.

Although the more or less autistic elaborations that form part of the content of one's imaginative view of self in a given social position are often somewhat bizarre, perhaps fantastic, it is important to note that role-identities are not at all purely idiosyncratic but actually include many conventional standards and expectations that would be held toward *any* occupant of that status. That is, among the contents of any role-identity are included those vague and abstract expectations we have discussed as social role.[19] It is through these conventional contents of one's role-identities, acquired in the socialization process, that one is irrevocably a member of his culture. Personal elaborations of these conventional contents are exceedingly important, yet they represent, in most cases, variations on culturally established themes. The conventional expectations provide the structural framework of a role-identity, whereas the individual embellishments put some human meat on these arid bones.

In interacting with strangers, we at first orient ourselves toward them in terms only of the ill-specified contours of their social roles. Such early interactions are, consequently, rather shallow, stilted, and uncertain. As we come to know them more personally, we are able to act toward them not merely in terms of their social roles but also in terms of their role-*identities*, taking into account their idiosyncratic interpretations and elaborations of those roles.[20]

Each role-identity of each individual thus has two aspects, the conventional and the idiosyncratic. The relative proportion of these two aspects varies from person to person, and from identity to identity for the same individual. Some people add little to the role-expectations they have learned; others modify and elaborate culturally defined roles to such extreme extents that the roles become unrecognizable to other people and the individuals are regarded as eccentric or mentally ill. Most of us, fortunately, fall somewhere between.

Because role-identities are idealized and rather idiosyncratic conceptions of oneself, the realities of life are constantly jarring

[19]See pp. 64–65.

[20]These differences receive considerable attention in Chapters 6 and 7.

them, raising difficulties and embarrassments for them. As a consequence of this jarring, we are always having to devise perspectives that allow us to *maintain* these views of ourselves, at some level, despite contradictory occurrences. As a creature of ideals, man's main concern is to maintain a tentative hold on these idealized conceptions of himself, to *legitimate* his role-identities.

Such legitimation is accomplished principally through *role-performances*, which are all those dramaturgical performances construed as relevant in some fashion to the particular role-identity in question.[21] If we conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with (and fulfilling of) the specific contents of our imaginative view of self, that view becomes a legitimate one. But, in speaking of such performances, we must remember always that much of human drama takes place in the head, in the inner forum. As mentioned above, many of our best role-performances take place purely in fantasy and imagination. A person who entertains the role-identity of a writer may never put a word on paper but may still partially legitimate this identity merely by toying with plot after plot purely in his mind. The reason that this kind of covert performance can be partially legitimating is that it is essentially a "dry run" or preparation for actual performance. It is, in this sense, the initial phase of an act and serves as a sign or gesture of what may come. To the extent that this is true, Mead has argued, one need not wait to see the rest of what is to come; the gesture stands for the entire act.[22] Therefore, this vicarious performance stands for an actual performance that may follow and, to the degree to which the connection is certain, provides the legitimation the act itself would have provided.

One might ask, then, why we ever bother with action at all, if we can (at least partially) legitimate identities simply through fantasy. Part of the answer,[23] of course, is that identities are not mere-

[21]Relevant research procedures are discussed on pp. 265–266. See also Turner, *op. cit.*

[22]*Cf.* pp. 51–52.

[23]Furthermore, if overt performances do not often follow one's vicarious performances, the latter becomes more uncertain as signs or gestures of the overt performances to follow. As this connection becomes more uncertain, the sign value (and therefore the legitimating value) of the vicarious performance becomes attenuated. And because particular persons are "built into" our imaginations of

ly for one's own consumption—other people demand that one claim some identity. If he does not, they are unsure how to classify him and, consequently, are not sure of how to act toward him. The result is that, if he does not claim some social identity, other people will *force* one upon him—perhaps one disadvantageous to him, for example, at the extreme, the identity of mental retardate or catatonic schizophrenic. Our bodies get in the way of other people, and they have to identify us before they can know what to do to get past us.

Yet if one does claim identities in this way, interpersonally, the legitimation of them is no longer so easy. He has not only to persuade himself that his views of himself are true enough, but he also has to act in such ways that the identities he has claimed before the other people are not disconfirmed in their eyes, for otherwise he is right back where he started—with no identity but in need of one.

This outcome leads to a consideration of what we call *role-support*, which is the expressed support accorded to an actor by his audience for his claims concerning his role-identity.[24] This support is not *simply* for his claim to the right to occupy the social position in question or for the conventional rights and duties of the accompanying social role, although role-support includes these points as a minimum. Nor is role-support to be equated simply with prestige, status, esteem, or social approval of one's conduct in a given social position.[25]

self, their reactions toward us are vital to the legitimation of these imaginations. Finally, in time, the accumulation of assessed reactions of others is effectively internalized into part of the "inner forum," so that we are "socially" motivated to do great deeds even though no one witnesses them. This process amounts to a kind of "reverse secondary reinforcement" (*cf.* Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New York: Wiley, 1964, pp. 42–43).

[24]Assessment procedures are discussed on pp. 266–267. See also Paul F. Secord and Carl W. Backman, "Interpersonal Approach to Personality," in Brendan H. Maher, ed., *Progress in Experimental Personality Research* (Volume II), New York: Academic Press, 1965, pp. 91–125.

[25]This fact is dramatized by the successful businessman or beautiful movie star who commits suicide, despite all the prestige and acclamation he has received. Though such people are apparently successful and "have everything to live for," the reactions of others simply have not supported the *specific* contents of their role-identities.

It is instead a set of reactions and performances by others the expressive implications of which tend to confirm one's detailed and imaginative view of himself as an occupant of a position. Role-support is centrally the implied confirmation of the specific *contents* of one's idealized and idiosyncratic imaginations of self. These expressive implications of others may be expressions "given" or expressions "given off," that is, intended or unintended.[26] The unwilling cries that escape the lips of a victim thus support the self-conceptions of the inquisitor as directly as do the flattering pleas of more pliable victims. And because it is the expressive *implications* of others' reactions that count as role-support, such support is not a thing to be simply perceived and weighed but is rather a matter of interpretation and construction. This fact gives rise to very important complications to be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter and in Chapter 5.

Such role-support is obtained from others primarily in response to one's own relevant role-performances. All kinds of people serve as audiences to one's performances and perhaps accord role-support in varying degrees, but their reactions are not given equal weight, just as in the theater itself the reactions of professional drama critics are taken more seriously than those of casual tourists visiting Broadway. Some audiences are recognized as having special competences and credentials. Others, like the family, are highly regarded on more general grounds; in fact, the reactions of some persons are taken more seriously simply because they have in the past tended strongly to support the very identity in question.

Nonetheless, all things being equal, each of us is his own most important audience, for, unlike other audiences, this one cannot be escaped. In the end, it is ourselves that we have to live with, and the role-support that we accord ourselves is most important.

In any case, taking the aggregate of the role-support accorded us by all the relevant audiences, there is almost always some discrepancy between the detailed content of the role identity and the role support gained from our performance; our overt role-performances are almost never brought off perfectly, and audiences are

[26]Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, pp. 2–6.

typically demanding. Accordingly, role-identities are seldom altogether legitimate. There is always some tension between the fostered reality of one's identity and discrepant impressions garnered from the external world.[27]

This discrepancy is exacerbated by the ephemeral nature of role-support. Like radioactive elements, role-support is unstable and decays as a function of time. An ample quantity of support today is no longer adequate tomorrow. This instability is a result of the volatility and fickleness of men. One's performance today is supported by others as entirely adequate, but tomorrow he must prove himself again, for his fellows (and he himself) recognize that skills, motivations, and resources often have a way of suddenly and inexplicably disappearing. "Can he still do the job? Is he losing his touch?" Past performances are an uncertain indicator of future capabilities, so that people cannot for long be taken on their laurels. Man's memory is no less fickle; yesterday's heroes are tomorrow's bootblacks. One quickly forgets his admiration and acclaim of another, who is thereby forced to impress us all over again. Besides, new audiences are constantly encountered who must of course be persuaded starting from scratch, and the evaluative criteria of old audiences are also subject to change.

Because of imperfect role-performances and the instability of role-support, then, identities are continually in need of legitimation. As proposed above, one of man's most distinctive motives is the compelling and perpetual drive to acquire support for his idealized conceptions of himself.

The need to legitimate one's role-identities encompasses something more than this search for role-support from others, however. Such support is merely a kind of social evidence shoring up one's claims to the identity, whereas the individual himself wishes to *enact* his roles, to fulfill his imaginings, to live according to his role-identities. The individual wants very much *to be and to do* as he imagines himself being and doing in a particular social position. As this congruence is seldom entirely possible, role-support—social testimony in support of his imaginings—takes on

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 65–66.

considerable value to the person and may in fact become the major goal of a particular performance.[28]

Nonetheless, gaining role-support from others without actually enacting the role to its full extent can sometimes be very frustrating, haunting, and hollow. One seeks interactions and audiences, not only (and perhaps not even primarily) to obtain role-support from other persons, but also as opportunities for enactments whose intrinsic gratifications he may enjoy and through which he can give *himself* role-support from his more richly elaborated perspectives.[29] Men seek to live their lives and to live them in light of their role-identities. To the degree that they fail to do so, to the degree that their self-conceptions are thus not legitimate in the eyes of self or other, men yet strive to *foster the social impression* that they are so legitimate, through the acquisition of role-support.

We shall be following out these strivings in the remainder of the book, but it is first necessary to complicate the matter by considering the implications of the fact that each individual has a great many role-identities, not all of which are necessarily compatible or equally legitimate.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ROLE-IDENTITIES

Everyone has, of course, a good many role-identities—one for each social position he occupies, aspires to occupy, or has fleetingly imagined himself occupying. These role-identities are not separate, each unto itself, but are woven into a complex pattern of identities. That is, they mutually influence one another and are organized into a more or less systematically interrelated whole. This organization of role-identities, as it exists at a given point in a

[28] This may be considered an instance of the "functional autonomy" of motives. *Cf.* Gordon W. Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961, pp. 226–257.

[29] We can, of course, give ourselves more exactly *relevant* support than can others for no one else is so familiar with the exact contents of our identities.

person's life span, corresponds to what many theorists have called the "ideal self."[30]

It should be emphasized that in speaking of "pattern" we do not imply the complementarity or integration of the constituent parts; indeed, it is a *variable* quality of considerable importance. What we do mean to imply is that the parts exist in relation to one another and that the relationships may be those of conflict as easily as those of compatibility. We shall see, in fact, that there is often a greater or lesser degree of conflict, even incompatibility, among the separate role-identities of a single individual.

The over-all organization of role-identities also varies in degree of *cohesiveness,* that is, in the extent to which separate role-identities are tightly or loosely interrelated. In most cases, they seem to "cluster" in smaller numbers of subpatterns. The basis for this clustering is ordinarily that several role-identities involve similar skills, have the same persons "built into" their contents, or pertain to the same institutional context or period of one's life. These clusters may themselves be linked more or less closely with other clusters or may be quite rigidly "compartmentalized" or dissociated from others.[31]

The feature of this organization of role-identities with which we shall be principally concerned in this book, however, is that these identities are also loosely patterned in a somewhat plastic hierarchy of *prominence*.

The relative prominence of a given role-identity is the resultant of many factors. Among these factors is the degree to which the person himself supports his own imaginative view of his qualities and performances as an occupant of the given position. He may well recognize that, in certain respects, this imaginative view of

[30]For a summary of work related to this concept, see Ruth C. Wylie, *The Self-Concept: A Review of Methodological Considerations and Measuring Instruments* (rev. ed.), Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974.

[31]Rigid compartmentalization is typically a less than conscious attempt to cope with latent conflicts among such clusters. The extreme case of such compartmentalization would be the supposed "multiple personality" cases reported in the psychiatric literature. See, for example, W. S. Taylor and Mabel F. Martin, "Multiple Personality," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* 1944, 39: 281–300.

himself does not entirely square with even his own appraisals of his overt performances of the role, or, on the other hand, he may be quite pleased on the whole with his performances. Those identities that, from our egocentric perspectives, we more nearly manage to live up to are, in their rarity, very dear to our hearts.

Also involved, however, is the degree to which one's view of self has been supported by relevant alters—one's boss, peers, relatives, friends, experts—people whose evaluations and appraisals of this role could be expected to count. Not all these opinions carry equal weight, of course, for some audiences are recognized as more competent judges and some as personally more valuable to the individual. What is involved, then, is some sort of weighted average of the degrees of support from all these various audiences.[32]

Perhaps paramount among these determinants of prominence, however, is the degree to which the individual has committed himself to the particular contents of this role-identity, has gambled his regard for himself on living up to certain imaginations of self. If, for example, he has staked much of his self-esteem on becoming a recognized sculptor, that identity will loom prominently in his self-organization.

The same conclusion can be drawn with respect to more material investment of resources in a given identity. If one stakes his entire fortune or life's work on fulfilling a particular view of himself, that identity will be more prominent in the hierarchy, for one does not live by imagination alone. Man is still an animal and requires certain material resources to maintain pursuit of his various enterprises; these resources are not discarded lightly.

Accordingly, those identities and roles that materially benefit the individual by gaining him extrinsic rewards like money, labor, goods, favors, prestige, and the necessities of life itself will, other things being equal, weigh more prominently than those that gain him little or nothing.[33]

[32]For the operations that yield this weighted average, see p. 261.

[33]Complicating this distinction is the important fact that extrinsic rewards (as well as the intrinsic gratifications discussed in the following paragraph) can serve at the same time as *symbols* of less material rewards. The cash award known as the "Nobel Prize" or the lovers' first kiss is at least as important for its symbolic sig-

These rewards, however, must be contrasted with yet another determinant of prominence, the various *intrinsic* gratifications obtained from the performance of roles and the fulfillment of the corresponding role-identities. These gratifications differ from rewards like money in that they are not contingent concomitants of adequate performance.[34] Intrinsic gratifications include, to begin with, the sheer sense of efficacy in having done something with reasonable competence.[35] Animals are active, not passive, creatures, who enjoy activity and the exploratory challenge of many of their actions. More purely bodily gratifications must also be included in the category of intrinsic rewards, such as the sexual pleasure involved in certain roles, the pleasant body tone associated with athletic performance, and the soothing sensation of a cold drink consumed in connection with some sociable role-performance. Such intrinsic gratifications thus constitute another important link between the animal and the human worlds.

These several factors determining the prominence of a given role-identity—its degree of self- and social support, one's degree of commitment to and investment in it, and the extrinsic and intrinsic gratifications associated with it—undoubtedly differ in their relative importance. The weighting of these factors cannot be pronounced upon a priori, however, for the weighting almost certainly varies from person to person and would have to be empirically determined for each person under study.

Furthermore, for any one of these factors taken alone—for example, degree of social support—the relevant quantity is actually some sort of *average past level* of that factor.[36] That is, it represents

nificance with respect to certain role-identities as it is for its more material significance.

[34]Those gratifications that are thus contingent are *extrinsic* rewards. This distinction has interesting parallels with Blau's usage of the same terms to denote those rewards that are intrinsic to the particular interpersonal relationship and those that are essentially external or ulterior to that relationship. For Blau, the relevant unit is the interpersonal relationship, whereas in this book the unit is the performance. *Cf.* Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16, 35–38.

[35]Edward L. Deci, *Intrinsic Motivation*, New York: Plenum Press, 1975.

[36]It seems likely that this quantity is not a *simple* average of past levels but one that gives less weight to measurements taken in the more remote past, rather as Markov processes do. *Cf.* John G. Kemeny and J. Laurie Snell, *Finite Markov Chains*, Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1960.

the *typical* amount of social support (or investment, commitment, and so forth) associated with the given identity up to the present time. The over-all prominence of a given role-identity is, then, actually a weighted average of the average past levels of several factors.[37]

Because of this fact, the prominence of that identity may eventually change over time if it should happen that events raise or lower the level of any of the several factors. For example, if one suddenly begins receiving a greater degree of social support for a given identity, this increase will in time serve to raise the average past level of that factor and thereby tend to increase the prominence of that identity, other factors remaining constant. These relatively long-term changes in the prominence hierarchy are of considerable importance and will be analyzed in Chapter 8, but they also raise considerations of more immediate relevance.

As the prominence hierarchy (or ideal self) is affected by time-linked changes in the factors underlying the prominence of a given identity, it is obvious that these factors are themselves somehow affected by the individual's continuing sequence of interactions.

Each and every interactional encounter calls forth some kind of role-performance that involves at least some of the individual's complement of role-identities. This activation of identities perforce increases his investment in (and usually his commitment to) those identities. Furthermore, the performance itself necessarily gains him *some* quantity (positive, negative, or zero) of self- and social support of the identities and of the intrinsic and extrinsic gratifications associated with their performance. These obtained quantities are then, of course, figured into the cumulative average level of these factors.

Where do these obtained quantities come from? Investment, commitment, and self-support of identities stem, of course, from the person himself—as performer and as audience, respectively. But the other quantities—social support of identities and many of the intrinsic and extrinsic gratifications deriving from their enactment—can be obtained only from others, the audiences before

[37]As might be expected, direct computation of this quantity is not altogether practicable, and a somewhat simpler procedure is recommended for actual research purposes at the present time. See pp. 260–262.

which the performance is staged. These other persons in turn, it must be remembered, also perform in the encounter and necessarily receive some quantities of these same factors. *Each* participant thus receives such quantities, and, if they can be obtained only from others, each must also give of them. In effect, then, the participants *exchange* varying quantities of these three factors; they reward others, and are rewarded by them, in the coin of social support of identities and of intrinsic and extrinsic gratifications.

In each human encounter, individuals are striving for rewards of these three types. As members of the distinctively human world, we seek social support of our identities. Primarily as members of the animal world, we seek intrinsic gratifications of role-performances. To bolster our capital resources for carrying out our various social enterprises, we strive for various extrinsic gratifications.

All three types of reward are at stake in every human encounter, and persons seek to maximize the rewards of given encounters across all three types. Or, to put it more accurately, they seek to maximize the *profits* to themselves in given encounters, for there are costs in interaction, as well as rewards. These costs include the investment of scarce resources to gain access to the encounter and the forgoing of alternative rewards, in addition to the varying quantities of social support and intrinsic and extrinsic rewards one must cede to the other participants. Once assembled in common presence, the participants in the encounter *bargain* and haggle over the kinds and quantities of these rewards that each will give the others in return for what he hopes to receive. This bargaining is not entirely ruthless and haphazard, of course, but is conducted with at least an eye toward certain rules of the market. These rules, like, for example, the principle of distributive justice, have been rather thoroughly explored in recent exchange theories of interaction.[38] We too shall treat of these rules in later chapters.

We wish here to emphasize, however, that our approach to social exchange and bargaining differs rather importantly from those

[38] *E.g.*, George C. Homans, *Social Behavior* (rev. ed.), New York: Harcourt, 1974; Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," *American Sociological Review*, 1960, 25: 161–179; and Richard M. Emerson, "Social Exchange Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1976, 2: 335–362.

of other theorists mentioned in Chapter 1. Among the several differences that will become apparent in later chapters, two are of particular relevance at this point: (1) We are as interested in how exchange proceeds in a single encounter as we are in the dynamics of enduring *relationships* of exchange; (2) we believe that any viable approach to social exchange must sharply distinguish among the three categories of rewards mentioned above and must examine the resulting types of *mixed* exchange (or barter of unlike kinds). (We shall try always in this book to give due weight to intrinsic and extrinsic gratifications as important categories of social rewards, but our primary emphasis will fall, nonetheless, upon the more distinctive category of support for identities.)

We shall take up the exchange processes characteristic of relationships in Chapter 7 and those characteristic of encounters, as well as the various types of mixed exchange, in Chapter 6. Many considerations of logistics, or allocation, typically regarded as part of the broader exchange process, will be treated in Chapter 9.

THE SELF AS A DETERMINANT OF ACTION[39]

If, in the presence of others, one strives to maximize through his performance the possible profits in terms of these three categories of rewards, what should the content of that performance be?

As we have argued, each of the person's role-identities suggests (or contains within itself) many concrete actions or performances that he would like to stage, being the sort of person he likes to think of himself as being. Some of these suggested alternative performances are more central and important to the given identity than others, and many would be mutually incompatible in overt action at a single point in time. Nonetheless, each role-identity suggests a number of alternative lines of action.

[39] *Cf.* Mischel, *op. cit.*; Chad Gordon and Kenneth J. Gergen, editors, *The Self in Social Interaction* (Volume I), New York: Wiley, 1968; Gergen, *The Concept of Self*, New York: Holt, 1971; and Michael Argyle, *Social Interaction*, New York: Atherton, 1969.