Sociological Theory '86

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"THE MECHANICS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION: TOWARD A COMPOSITE MODEL OF SIGNALING AND INTERPRETING"

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INTRODUCTION

The analysis of interaction converged in the early decades of this century in the works of George Herbert Mead (1934, 1938) and Alfred Schutz (1932). This conceptual convergence involved two very different traditions, behaviorism and phenomenology. As Norbert Wiley (1975) has remarked, Mead and Schutz had to "cheat" on their respective traditions in order to bring off the reconciliation. Mead took behaviorism away from J. B. Watson's (1913) methodological strait jacket into the subjective processes of thought and meaning, whereas Schutz saved phenomenology from Husserl's (1913/1968) solipsism by introducing phenomenology to the external world of others. Yet, in making these concessions to the materialism of behaviorism and the idealism of phenomenology, the reconciliation was far from complete. And today, the respective followers of these two giants often view each other as protagonists. Followers of Schutz, such as ethnomethodologists and various born-again phenomenologists, view the followers of Mead, such as symbolic interactionists and role theorists, with considerable suspicion, if not acrimony.

This situation is, I feel, unfortunate, because the convergence of Mead and Schutz should also be reflected in the work of their contemporary followers. Moreover, even where Mead and Schutz or their followers might disagree, I think that there is considerable complementarity among their points of disagreement. In fact, far too much theorizing in general and theorizing about the process of interaction in particular has involved reaffirmations of intellectual dogmas. We seem unwilling to seek reconciliation of theories by selectively borrowing ideas from very diverse traditions, and then, putting them together in composite or synthetic models. Such exercises are too often viewed as "superficial" by proponents of various perspectives, since the full details of their hero's work have not been fully explicated. In my view, nothing could be less constructive in developing sociological theory. For it is safe to assume that no scholar or theoretical tradition has all of the answers; rather, each perspective reveals only a portion of the truth, as much as it can ever be discovered. And so, our goal as theorists should be to pull concepts from their intellectual traditions—indeed, rip from the firm grip of their true believers—and see if we can synthesize them in ways that furthers our understanding of social

processes. Naturally, detailed analysis within a particular theoretical school of thought can be highly productive. There are many example of creative breakthroughs by those in various camps (e.g., Perinbanayagam, 1985; Cicourel, 1973; Rosenberg, 1979; Turner, 1980; and others). Yet, my sense is that theorizing about interaction has remained too confined within schools of thought. Moreover, too much emphasis on *one* process as *the* most central is typical in this area. Currently, there is an overemphasis on the structure of talk and language, with the result that theorists retreat into linguistics. Similiar conclusions can be drawn for past topics that have attracted passionate devotees, including "dramaturgy," "framing," "role-making," "accounting," etc. All of these traditions tell us something about interaction, but they are not the whole story. And thus, at the same time theorizing pursues topics in depth, it should also seek to reconcile these topics in more synthetic models.

In this spirit, then, I will view the models of interaction presented by Mead and Schutz as a conceptual canopy for synthesizing more recent models. In this exercise, I hope to demonstrate that portions of diverse theoretical projects—including those of Jurgen Habermas, Harold Garfinkel, Ralph Turner, and Erving Goffman—are highly complementary when reconceptualized within Mead's and Schutz's general framework. Of course, in performing this tentative synthesis, I will use the concepts selectively. My purpose here is not to summarize, or analyze each scholar in agonizing detail, but rather, to move toward a more synthetic theory of social interaction.

Let me begin with Mead and Schutz, moving successively to what I see as important ideas in the models in Erving Goffman's dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959) and frame analysis (Goffman, 1974), Ralph Turner's role theory (R. Turner, 1962, 1968, 1978, 1980), Jurgen Habermas' critical project (Habermas, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1981), and Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodological alternative (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984). Then, I will construct a composite model that pulls together selected elements of these thinker's work.

In this exercise, I will emphasize the "mechanics" of interaction. That is, when two or more individuals interact, what is it that they actually do? I will bracket out from consideration other important processes such as motivation, cognition, structuring, etc., that must eventually be a part of a composite model of human interaction. The model
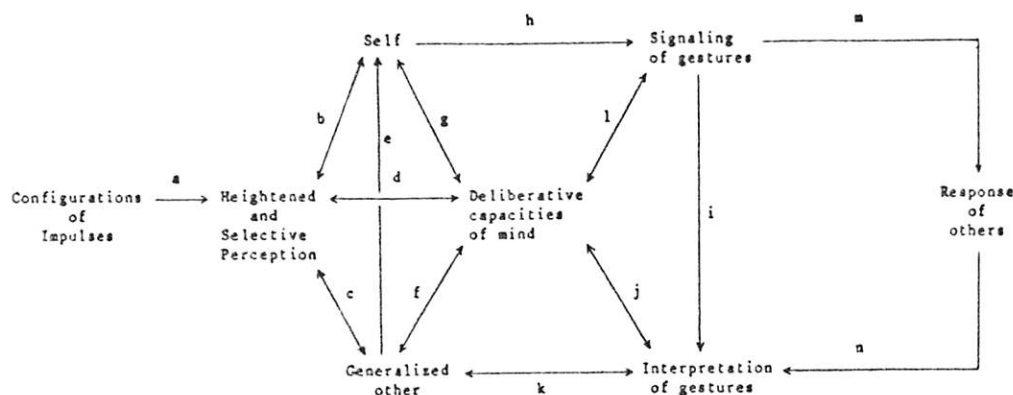
Figure 1: Mead's Composite Model of the Act and Interaction

presented here will be limited, but decomposition of the analysis of interaction is a useful theoretical strategy. For too long, I believe, we have tried to view the process of interaction globally, asserting the efficacy of one set of concepts. My strategy (J. Turner, 1987) is to decompose the structure of interaction into separate sets of basic processes. This paper concerns only certain delimited properties of interaction, although I will mention others in passing at various points.

MEAD AND SCHUTZ ON INTERACTION

G. H. Mead (1934) and A. Schutz (1932) each developed their models of interaction as a reaction against the deficiencies, respectively, of John B. Watson's (1913) extreme "behaviorism" and Max Weber's (1918/1978:3-63) typological analysis of "action" and "social action." They did so by drawing from very different intellectual traditions, the pragmatism of Peirce (1931/58) and Dewey (1922) for Mead and the phenomenology of Husserl (1913/1968) for Schutz. Yet, their critiques are still relevant and, despite their vastly different intellectual backgrounds, their respective models converge.

In Figure 1, I have pulled together Mead's two basic models for understanding interaction. One is his model of "the act" (Mead, 1938), and the other is his model of "interaction" (Mead, 1934). For Mead, "the act" consists of four basic phases: (1) "impulses" or states of disequilibrium with the environment; (2) heightened and selective "perception" where objects, including oneself, others, and generalized others, are viewed in terms of their relevance for restoring equilibrium; (3) "manipulation" of both the external environment and the mental environment made possible by humans' capacities for "mind" (that is, the ability to "imaginatively rehearse" alternative lines of conduct and to choose the alternative which will most likely restore equilibrium); and (4) "consummation" or the elimination of the impulse.

Mead's analysis emphasizes that blockage at any phase of the act increases the intensity of the previous phases. In essence, Mead's analysis of the act is a theory of motivation and is not directly relevant to my present emphasis on the mechanics of interaction. Yet, his model of the act can be merged with his analysis of interaction by viewing an individual as revealing configurations of impulses. As arrow (a) emphasizes, these configurations of impulses cause heightened and selective perception of relevant objects in the environment. Arrows (b) and (c) stress that self and generalized others are two of the most critical objects in the environment. Just how a person will "manipulate" the environment will, Mead argues, be highly circumscribed by their "meanings" or "dispositions to act" toward themselves as objects (self) and by the "community of attitudes" (generalized other) relevant to a situation. Moreover, the latter greatly influences the former, since individuals assess themselves in terms of the standards of the generalized other, as is emphasized with casual arrow (e). Thus, just how manipulation to consummate an impulse will proceed is determined by the nature and strength of the impulse itself and by the perception of relevant objects, the two most important being (1) the relevant community of attitudes, or generalized other, for a particular type of situation and (2) the perception of oneself as an object, especially as measured by the stands of the generalized other. These perceptual processes will, in turn, circumscribe the deliberative capacities of "mind," as is denoted by casual arrows (d), (f), and (g). As individuals "imaginatively rehearse" their alternatives, they are constrained by what objects they perceive to exist in a situation. While the two most relevant objects are self and the generalized other, the material aspects of the situation and the gestures of others are also crucial. But these are selectively perceived and seen through the prism of impulses, self-conceptions, and generalized others.

It is at this point in Figure 1 that Mead's model of "the act" can be merged with his analysis of interaction, or the "triadic matrix" as Mead termed the process. As humans deliberate, often implicitly and rapidly, about how to respond to
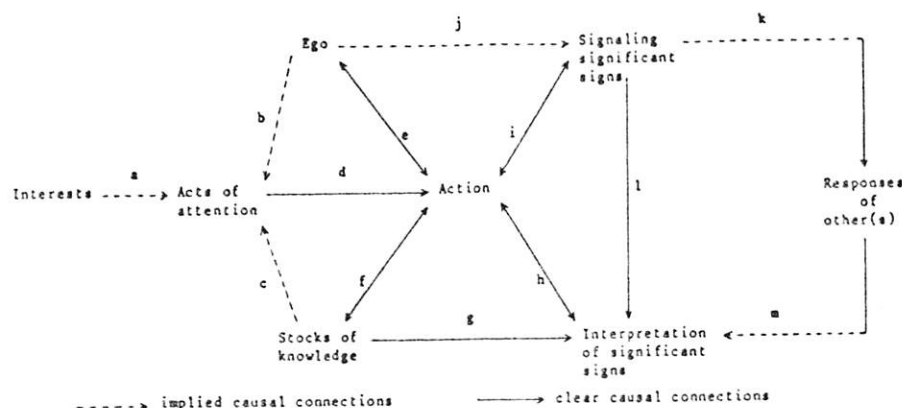
Figure 2: Schutz's Model of Interaction

others in their environment, they seek to reconcile impulses, conceptions of self, and communities of attitudes (as is stressed by causal arrows a, b, c, d, g, and f). It is possible, of course, that conscious thought is not involved before an individual acts; in such cases, causal arrows (a), (b), (c), (e), and (h) are the most relevant. That is, the emission of gestures will reflect impulses as these are mediated by perceptions of self and generalized others. Naturally, once such responses are emitted, they become part of the perceptual field of an individual, either directly (as indicated by causal arrows i and j) or indirectly through the responses of others to our gestures (as is denoted by causal arrows m, n, j).

If blockage of an impulse occurs, Mead argued that deliberative processes of mind intervene and individuals rehearse alternatives and imagine their consequences before emitting signals, as is stressed by arrow (1). Again, such deliberations are circumscribed by perceptions of self (g) and the generalized other (f) as well as by the responses of others (n and j). The process of signaling involves the emission of what Mead termed "conventional gestures" or "significant symbols" by which he meant signs that mean the same thing to both sender and receiver. For Mead, it is the generalized other that gives signals their "conventional" character, and so, once again the "community of attitudes" circumscribes the process of interaction. The most conspicuous class of conventional gestures is, of course, talk, but bodily movements, demeanor, and positioning are also defined by the generalized other in "conventional" terms. The result is that the emission of signals (what Mead termed the "I") is read and interpreted by oneself (arrow i, or what Mead termed the "me") and by others (arrow m) who respond to these signals by emitting their own signals (arrow n), as circumscribed by their own impulses, by perceptions of self and generalized other, and by minded deliberations. When these gestures of others are interpreted (arrow j), via the prism of self (g) generalized other (f and k) and minded delibera-

tions (j), then interaction has occurred through a process Mead labelled "taking the role of the other."

These models presented by Mead are, of course, well known, although I have not seen efforts to juxtapose the model of the act and interaction. My view is that contemporary analyses of interaction have, in essence, sought to "fill in" the details of the skeletal model presented in Figure 1, especially the processes of signaling and interpreting. Most role theory, symbolic interaction, and dramaturgy borrow this model, selectively emphasizing various causal forces behind signaling and interpreting. Thus, Mead's model is comprehensive, but it lacks details about the nature of signaling and interpreting. Present-day interactionist theorizing has sought to provide these details, and since the various schools of thought have all worked within the middle and right portions of the model in Figure 1, there is every reason to believe that synthesis of what are often seen as antagonist positions is possible.

Other traditions which are often critical of interactionism have tended to borrow from Alfred Schutz's revision of Husserl's phenomenological project. But as Figure 2 seeks to emphasize, they too have been working with a skeletal model that is very similar to Mead's, and hence, it should be possible to reconcile their approaches with each other and interactionism.

As Perinbanayagam (1975) has stressed, Schutz's model introduces "the other" in a less active way than Mead. Considerably more emphasis is placed upon the processes of "consciousness," per se, although the creation of "intersubjectivity" through the use of "significant signs," or signals over which actors have consensus, is prominent in Schutz's analysis. My goal is not to analyze Schutz's theoretical scheme in its full details, but instead, to outline its points of convergence with Mead's analysis. Hence, I have constructed Figure 2 in a manner that emphasizes this convergence. Schutz (1932) implies that actors' interests motivate them to call attention to experiences and to

Self ──────────→ Signaling

Stocks of ←──────→ Deliberative   Signals of
knowledge   capacities   others

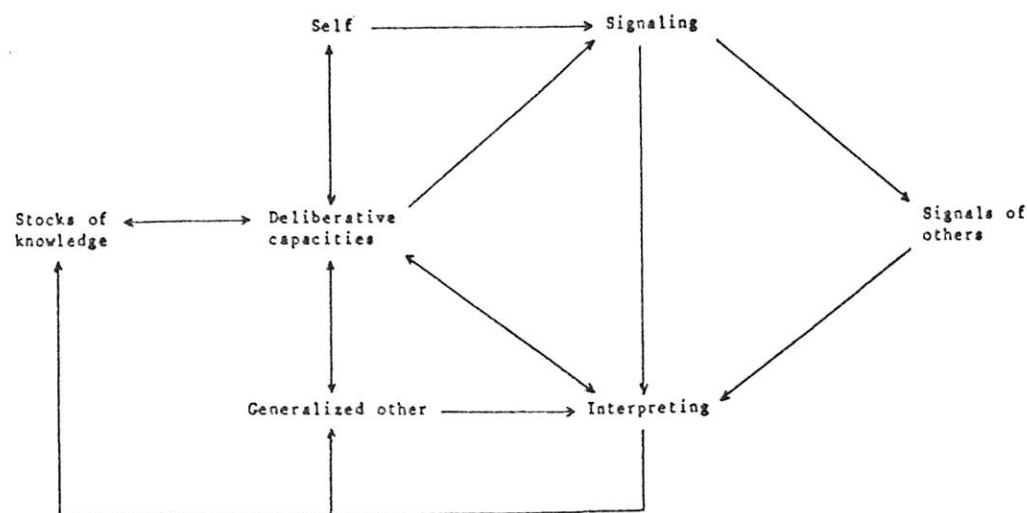Generalized other ──────────→ Interpreting

Figure 3: A Skeletal Model of the Mechanics of Interaction

interrupt the "stream of consciousness," as is indicated by causal arrow (a). Such calling of attention to some aspect of consciousness is termed "the act" or "activity" by Schutz. Such acts are also caused by the "pure ego," although much like his statements on "interests," Schutz did not pursue the forces that motivate actors and make them perceptually attentive. "Acts of attention" or "activity," which parallels Mead's formulation of the "perception phase" of the act, are ordered by one's "stock knowledge at hand," as is indicated by causal arrow (c). Such stocks represent configurations of meanings that give "unity to experiences." Just which stocks of "ordered experience" are drawn upon depends, Schutz argues, on the interests of an actor, although the latter are never analyzed in detail. As ordered experiences, stocks of knowledge provide a framework for interpreting external events, for determining what to expect, and for cataloguing new experiences (Schutz, 1932:81).

As such, his view of stocks of knowledge parallels Mead's conception of the generalized other; and it appears to function in a similiar manner. First, it circumscribes the process of "action" which is a behavior that "visualizes the projected act into the future." In a sense, this conceptualization is similiar to Mead's view of "mind" as a process of "imaginative rehearsal" or "deliberation," although it is not as explicitly formulated as in Mead's conceptualization which was borrowed, I should add, from Dewey (1922). Second, stocks of knowledge provide the criteria for interpreting the gestures of other(s), either directly (g) or through the process of conscious deliberation or "action" (arrows f, h). Third, as is indicated by arrows (f) and (i), stocks of knowledge are used as the guidelines for selecting those "significant signs" that actors employ in reference to others. And fourth, while Schutz is

somewhat unclear here, stocks of knowledge include ordered experiences of oneself in various types of situations; and so, as actors project the future consequences of behaviors, their stocks of knowledge define the appropriate self-orientations for a situation (as indicated by arrows f and e) and for the presentation of oneself through "significant signs" (arrows f, e, j). The signaling of signs is thus highly circumscribed by actors' stocks of knowledge.

Schutz's notion of "significant signs" denotes the same processes as Mead's formulation of the "significant symbol" or "conventional gesture." They are primarily linguistic codes and they signal agreed upon "meanings," while operating to provide information about what objects are relevant to a situation, what behaviors are likely, what projects are in progress (Schutz's "in-order-to" motives), and what past experiences prompt the present behaviors (Schutz's "because of" motives). Such signals influence the responses of others (arrow k), although Schutz becomes somewhat vague at this point. As Perinbanayagam (1975:505) concludes: "the 'other' is perceived as an entity, but is not recognized as directing any of his activities toward the self, does not even seem to want to participate in any joint action, in the creation of a social act, in the arrival at a common definition of selves and situations." Intersubjectivity is achieved by mutual signaling and interpreting (arrows k, m), but it is not viewed by Schutz as an active process. Actors "take for granted" a reciprocity of perspectives until proven otherwise.

This shift in emphasis from Mead's emphasis on the active construction of cooperative activity through mutual role-taking of each others' gestures to Schutz's emphasis on the presumption of intersubjectivity until significant-signs disrupt this tacit assumption underscores the major difference between interactionist and phenomenological orien-

tations. For those who follow Schutz, such as Cicourel (1973) and Garfinkel (1967), there is more emphasis on how actors avoid questioning implicit presumptions of intersubjectivity than on what they actually do to create intersubjectivity. For modern phenomenologists, then, intersubjectivity is an unquestioned presumption which actors actively seek to avoid questioning in their signaling and interpreting. In contrast, for contemporary interactionists, signaling and interpreting are active and assertive processes that allow for mutual role-taking and for the construction of joint actions.

Yet, this shift in emphasis should not be viewed as contradictory. The skeletal outlines of Mead's and Schutz's model are essentially the same; and the points of difference should, I believe, be seen as complementary rather than contradictory. Let me now illustrate this conclusion by focusing on that portion of their respective models which I call "the mechanics of interaction."

THE MECHANICS OF INTERACTION

In Figure 3, I provide a skeletal outline of the mechanics of interaction. The processes of signaling and interpreting are the most critical aspects of interaction, because they link actors together. Unless signals of one actor are responded to by another and become the basis for responses of this first order, interaction does not occur. The mechanics of interaction, therefore, revolve around what actors do in their mutual signaling and interpreting. And it is on this issue that theoretical traditions emanating from Mead and Schutz converge. In signaling and interpreting, actors use their stocks of knowledge, or "configurations of already lived experiences" (Schutz, 1932:81), in deliberating about the emission or interpretation of signals, in invoking self-definitions in a situation, and in determining the relevant "community of attitudes" in a situation. What I am arguing, then, is that stocks of knowledge are the deep background configurations which need to be focused during interaction. This is done through what Mead termed the "generalized other." That is, actors translate their lived experiences into an orienting perspective that reflects the attitudes, dispositions, meanings, expectations, and other collective representations that become associated with particular types of situations. These translations of stocks of knowledge via the generalized other operate to circumscribe cognitive deliberations, especially people's assessment of themselves as objects in a situation. Thus, just how actors will signal and interpret during interaction is a function of how stocks of knowledge are converted into communities of attitudes and self definitions.

When phrased in this way, these processes of using stocks of knowledge to generate self-definitions and the generalized other seem rather mystical and invoke all the problems inherent in idealism. In order to see how, and in what ways, they operate in interaction, then, we need to examine what people actually do when they signal and interpret. We need, in other words, to focus on the processes of signaling and interpreting, or what I see as the mechanics of interaction.

Signaling

The process of signaling involves the emission of what Mead termed "conventional" or "significant" gestures and what Schutz saw as "significant signs." Such gestures obviously include talk, but also other signals that have agreed upon meanings, with respect to such matters as bodily countenance, facial gestures, and bodily locomotion. In emitting such signals, the theoretical traditions emanating from Mead and Schutz have emphasized five processes: (1) staging or stage-making (Goffman, 1959; Collins, 1986; Giddens, 1984), (2) role-making (R. Turner, 1962), (3) claiming or claim-making (Habermas, 1970b, 1970c, 1981), (4) accounting or account-making (Garfinkel, 1967), and (5) framing or frame-making (Goffman, 1974). While these are typically seen as contradictory approaches, I see them as highly complementary.

I emphasize the active "making" of a stage, role, claim, account, or frame, because this is what signals do: they tell others what it is an individual is trying to make for himself or herself in a situation. Let me now review each of these "making" processes, but I should caution that I am not trying to review the entire corpus of work generated by any theorist. My goal is to extract and modify only those concepts that can help us understand how humans signal during the course of an interaction. As a result, my review of the key concepts will be brief; it is intended only to suggest lines for more detailed inquiry.

(1) *Stage-making.* Since Goffman's (1959) seminal analysis of the presentation of self, the processes involved in "staging" an interaction have received increased attention. As diverse scholars such as Luhmann (1982), Giddens (1984), and Collins (1975), for example, have incorporated ideas of how actors use "stocks of knowledge" to develop definitions of stage-craft and thereby organize the physical and ecological aspects of a situation. There are, I think, three basic dimensions of stagecraft to which individuals become attuned as they try to sustain self-definitions and use the generalized other to organize their responses: (a) those concerning the relative positioning of individuals in space, (b) those denoting the degree of "front" to "back" stage movement, and (c) those indicating the meaning of physical props (clothing, offices, desks, rooms, hallways, etc.). All of these aspects of stagecraft are, of course, interrelated, but each represents a separate

dimension that is used by individuals to *make* for themselves a line of conduct in relation to other(s). In most situations, competent actors possess similiar "generalized others" in that they "know" what relative positioning of individuals, movement across stage-fronts, and utilization of physical props "mean" and what responses they imply.

(2) *Role-making*. As Ralph Turner (1962) was the first to conceptualize adequately, individuals possess stocks of role-conceptions (sequences of stereotypical behavior) and draw upon these role conceptions to *make* a role for themselves in interaction situations. Indeed, Turner assumes that there is a tendency among humans "to shape the phenomenal world into roles." Actors operate under a "folk" presumption that their respective gestures constitute a syndrome or coherent whole and that they can, therefore, signal a particular role by the emission of gestures associated with a syndrome (R. Turner, 1962, 1968). As individuals role-make, then, they draw upon stocks of role-conceptions, translate these into more precise conceptions in terms of the generalized other, and orchestrate their gestures in a way that informs a waiting and expectant audience about *the* role they are asserting. Turner would argue, however, that actors' role-conceptions constitute only "loose cultural frameworks," with the result that much gesturing by individuals involves an effort to specify in more detail their line of conduct. Such is no doubt the case, but I would qualify Turner's argument in this sense: individuals carry more than "loose frameworks" in their stocks of knowledge; they also possess a large repertoire of *fine-tuned* role-conceptions and these become even more fine-tuned as actors invoke the relevant "perspective" or "generalized other" for a particular situation and as they try to sustain their self-conception in such situations. Thus, role-making does not typically involve filling in idiosyncratic details; rather, it involves emitting gestures to inform others about which *particular variant* of a role they are trying to make for themselves in order to affirm their self-definitions and to meet their interpretation of the appropriate attitudes for the situation.

In this process of making a role, individuals often rely upon stocks of stagecraft to signal the role that they are attempting to assume. Thus, successful role-making often depends upon possessing necessary resources to manage props, staging areas and the relative positioning of individuals. In most situations, however, one's basic role is dictated by the existing macrostructure which distributes positioning options, physical props, and staging areas among individuals, but even under these conditions, individuals will make a more fine-tuned role for themselves.

(3) *Claim-making*. As Jurgen Habermas' critical project has evolved over the last decades, it has increasingly highlighted the process of "communi-

cative action" (Habermas, 1981). Ignoring this larger critical project, which I find hopelessly naive and romantic in its full details (J. Turner, 1986), Habermas has nonetheless isolated an important property of all interaction: "claim-making." For Habermas, the "ideal" and "least oppressive" interaction is one where actors are free to signal claims about the "validity" of what they are saying, while others are free to challenge suchs claims and force those making them to justify what they are saying (Habermas, 1970b, 1970c). This kind of dialogue is, of course, often terminated by appeals to authority and other coercive forces but, in Habermas' view, the ideal for which members of a society should strive is open communication in which actors can make claims and have them challenged without reference to power, authority, coercion, and other mechanisms of domination. As actors "give reasons for and against claims," they are more likely to achieve "mutual understanding." In order for this constructive dialogue to occur, people must share a common "lifeworld" in Edmund Husserl's terms, or in Schutz's (1932) translation, similiar "stocks of knowledge." For it is this "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns" that actors use as the implicit arbitrator of their validity claims, challenges, and rational discourse.

Thus, in "ideal" interactions, Habermas sees individuals as sharing stocks of knowledge and as using these to make (and challenge) validity claims as they signal their respective courses of action. There are, according to Habermas, three lines along which these claims are made. First, individuals assert that they are "sincere and authentic" in the sense of expressing their true subjective experiences. Second, actors indicate that their signals and behaviors are "normatively appropriate" in accordance to "generalized others." And third, individuals make claims as to the "propositional truth," or the assertion that their signals and actions represent in terms of relevant generalized other the most effective means to an end.

If we remove much of the ideology/idealism from Habermas' argument, I think that an important dynamic of human interaction is exposed. Signaling always involves an implicit, and at times explicit, making of validity claims about sincerity, appropriateness, and effectiveness; these claims can be challenged or accepted; and it is to the resolution of claims that much signaling in interaction is directed. Thus, a considerable amount of verbal and non-verbal signaling in a situation involves appeals to common stocks of knowledge and to more situational generalized others about means-ends, sincerity, and norms. Actors subtly make the claims that their behaviors are authentic, appropriate, and effective. If these claims can go unchallenged, whether because of

consensus and agreement or power and coercion, interaction will proceed smoothly. If they are challenged, however, then the interaction will cycle increasingly around the re-making of validity claims.

Thus, underlying other signaling processes, such as staging and role-making, is a series of typically implicit assertions about the validity of signals with respect to norms, means-ends, and sincerity. While Habermas' grand intellectual scheme has its flaws, to be charitable about the matter, this portion of his project captures a critical mechanism of interaction.

(4) *Account-making.* Habermas' ideas are complemented by yet another radical tradition in social theory, ethnomethodology. Much like critical theory, the polemical extremes in many ethnomethodological arguments are best forgotten. Instead, only selected ideas should be extracted because they help fill in a more general model of signaling.

Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984) emphasizes the importance of the "folk" "methods" that people use to create the "sense," even an illusionary sense, that they share the same external and intersubjective worlds. That is, much signaling in interaction, especially talk, involves use of implicit stocks of ethnomethods to "account-make." By presenting signals—from the nod of one's head at the appropriate moment to taking one's proper turn in a conversational exchange— individuals create an implicit background of "what is real" and they develop mutual feelings that they share a common world. This "sense of facticity" that is built up from the mutual use of "ethnomethods" is essential to the smooth flow of interaction, as Garfinkel's famous breaching experiments clearly documented (Garfinkel, 1963, 1967). In fact, much signaling in interaction involves efforts to avoid challenging the presumption that actors share a common world.

Thus, individuals carry stocks of interpersonal techniques and understandings of *how* as well as *when* to use certain gestures in an ongoing interaction. They invoke these in accordance with the demands of the generalized other and their self-definitions; and they subtly employ, often unconsciously, these techniques to make or re-make a disrupted situation appear to be real. Hence, I see three basic kinds of ethnomethodological signaling as critical to an interaction. First, there are practices that individuals employ to sustain an ongoing interchange of signals, and thus, the sense of a shared world (techniques such as "letting it pass," for example). Second there are folk methods that people use to repair or re-make an account that has been breached or disrupted (techniques, for example, like "asking questions apologetically"). And third, let me add to Garfinkel's analysis by suggesting that there are techniques which interactants use to assert a given sense of reality (techniques, for instance, like emphasizing certain words in a sequence or asking an assertive question). Just which configuration of these ethnomethods is employed depends, I think, on the nature of the generalized other appropriate to the situation and on the definitions of self that actors are seeking to sustain in that situation.

Much like claiming, however, these accounting processes are woven into other signaling processes. They are often implicitly employed; and individuals frequently are unaware of their operation. Yet, they provide an important undergirding for more explicit signaling processes, such as staging and role-making. For efforts to stage a situation, to make a role for oneself, or even to assert validity claims will be difficult if actors cannot "sense" or "feel" that they share the same fundamental world.

(5) *Frame-making.* I have not stressed two important aspects of Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology—indexicality and reflexivity— because they tend to create excessive subjectivism and relativism. If all expressions in conversations and other signals are indexical and tied to context, and if all signals are reflexive in the sense of reaffirming existing definitions, then the "reality" can only reside in individuals' beliefs, definitions, and other cognitions. There can be no world "out there" independent of the illusions constructed by actors who must index every expression and who use expressions to sustain presumptions of what is real.

Collins (1987) has suggested that Erving Goffman's (1974) "frame analysis" can provide a way out of this subjectivist trap without losing the insight that much interaction revolves around the imposition of subjective definitions of reality. I believe that Goffman (1974) has isolated an important process, although I will alter his ideas somewhat in order to emphasize their importance to the process of signaling in interaction. During an interaction, actors cognitively "frame" a situation by enclosing it within a series of definitions of what exists and should transpire. Goffman analogizes to a "picture frame" which places a border around the subject-matter, thereby containing it. Framing can, however, occur at multiple levels, for frames can be places inside of other frames. There are "primary frames" that confine an interaction to considerations of the world of physical objects (staging) and immediate networks of relations with others (roles), but actors can surround such primary frames with other, more inclusive frames that impose new and broader definitions and expectations of what is real and should occur. Actors can thus "transform" the frame, or framework, of a situation by adding or removing frames.

My view is that much of Goffman's discussion is vague and metaphorical, but the idea of framing captures an important dynamic. Signaling in an

interaction situation will, from Goffman's perspective, involve providing information about frames. To a great extent, invoking a generalized other dictates which frames are appropriate to a situation, how many frames can be imposed on the situation, and what kinds of transformations from frame to frame are acceptable. But actors must signal, often implicitly, which frames they are using and when they are making transformations. The most crucial frames are, I think, those that dictate the extent of self-involvement, the relevant institutional norms, the extent of group boundaries, and the classes of roles that can be used in the interaction.

Such framing activity thus circumscribes the accounting process by providing the substantive context for the indexing of expressions and their reflexive interpretation. Furthermore, framing is facilitated by, and at the same time contributes to, claim-making, role-making, and stage-making. These latter processes provide important cues about which frames are being used in a situation by specifying the objects, positions, roles, norms, means-ends, and forms of sincerity in an interaction. And of course they also signal the nature of the context in which expressions are to be indexed and accounts rendered. Yet, accounting, role-making, staging, and claiming are insufficient for framing most situations. Additional signals must typically be emitted to indicate the frame(s) being used. For example, when someone says "let's not get into that," "well, if you insist," "forget it," "be serious," "let's be reasonable," "don't bring that up again," "that's not my thing," and so on, they are imposing frames, or shifting frames. These kinds of explicit framing signals also help construct accounts, and at the same time, provide cues that circumscribe staging, role-making, claiming, and accounting.

Interpreting

The reciprocal of these five signaling processes is interpretation. Actors read the gestures of others, as well as their own, and interpret them in light of their self-conception(s) and stocks of knowledge as made more concrete by generalized others. That is, they take from their stocks those meanings about themselves and the situation which allow them to interpret the staging, role-making, claiming, accounting, and framing activities of others; and in so doing, they also assume the perspective of others. In Mead's terms, they "take the role of the others" or in Schutz's view "achieve reciprocity of perspectives." Hence, as people signal, they also interpret. As reciprocals of signaling, such interpreting processes involve: (1) frame-taking, (2) account-taking, (3) claim-making, (4) role-taking, and (5) stage-taking.

(1) *Frame-taking.* As actors read their own gestures and those of others, they interpret the frames being employed in a situation. They make assessments about the degree of commitment of self to an activity, the kinds of norms being employed, the boundaries of the situation, and the types of roles being played. Such assessments help in indexing others' gestures in order to understand what procedures are necessary to sustain a sense of a shared world, what techniques would be useful in repairing a damaged situation, and what interpersonal options are likely to be most effective in asserting a particular account. As the same time, interpreting frames provides a perspective for understanding validity claims as well as a sense for how best to challenge such claims. Moreover, interpreting the frames being imposed by others facilitates the process of verifying the roles of others and for understanding their staging activities.

(2) *Account-taking.* As individuals read the gestures of others, they engage in two related activities. First, "taking" from their stocks of knowledge, they "fill in" necessary contextual and background details in order to "account for" the signaling activities of others. Since all signals are "indexical" (Garfinkel, 1967) an account must assess the context-dependent meaning of words and non-verbal gestures as these denote the staging, roles, and validity claims of others. Second, individuals must interpret the "ethnomethods" that others use in response to their gestures. Individuals implicitly must assess the extent to which their assertions, glosses, queries, and other folk methods have been tacitly acknowledged by others. And third, using stocks of knowledge, individuals must intuitively appraise the folk methods employed by others in order to develop an account of "what's going on" and "what's real."

(3) *Claim-taking.* As individuals subtly assert validity claims about sincerity, effectiveness, and appropriateness, others must "take" these claims into consideration and, in light of frames and the accounts in which the claims are implicated, accept or challenge them. When voiced, challenges then become part of the claim-making process, for in presenting a challenge, individuals are also making a "counter-claim" as to what is sincere, appropriate, or effective.

Much like account-taking, these processes of claim-taking are implicit, but they more readily come to the level of conscious deliberation than accounting processes. Phrases such as "who are you trying to kid," "get off it," "bull shit," "that's the silliest thing I've ever heard" are, in essence, the result of claim-taking and the issuance of a challenge (now, claim-making) to the validity claim of another. Such challenges are particularly likely when others' framing is not correctly interpreted or accepted and when their account-taking has created problems in achieving a sense of a shared, factual world.

(4) *Role-taking*. As humans read each others signals, they are able to place themselves mentally in the role of the other, to assume their perspective, and to realize their disposition to act. Mead (1934) termed this process role-taking; and I will retain his usage with a somewhat narrower focus. All individuals possess conceptions of "roles" and they use these not only to make roles for themselves in a situation, but also to interpret the efforts of others to make a role. Such interpretations are, however, supplemented by additional stocks of knowledge as these are filtered through the generalized other.

First, in accordance with Turner's (R., 1968) assertion of a "folk norm of consistency," I think that individuals carry very fine-tuned stocks about syndromes of gestures so that within any given context, the signals of others are presumed to denote a more precise role which needs to be discovered.

Second, these syndromes concern not just external signals, but corresponding subjective states imputed to the emitter of the syndrome. Moreover, as overt behavioral signals an presumed internal states are combined to form a consistent whole, new and emergent interpretations of subjective states can occur. That is, as each piece of signaling information is added to the previous ones, perceptions of the other's subjective state can change, and often in rather dramatic ways as one or two additional signals provide information that requires re-assessment of previous gestures. Thus, as R. Turner (1962, 1968) argues, actors are constantly seeking to "verify" and "re-verify" the roles imputed to others, and in attempting such verifications individuals take from their stocks of knowledge information about (a) broadly-defined, institutional role conceptions, (b) fine-tuned variants of these general conceptions, and (c) corresponding subjective states appropriate to (a) and (b). If inconsistency appears in the gestures of others with respect to (a), (b), and (c), then cognitive dissonance is created. Initially, this dissonance may be rationalized away or simply ignored in an ethnomethodological "gloss," but if it is strong and persists, a "re-evaluation" of the imputed role of the other will be necessary. Thus, "verification" and "re-verification" are related processes of role-taking.

Third as Schutz (1932) argued, much interaction occurs in terms of "mutual typifications" of the other as an "ideal type," or as one who is merely the representative of a social category. Thus, stocks of knowledge dictate that certain situations and corresponding classes of signals indicate that it is appropriate to place other's into stereotyped categories. Such ideal typical roles are, in essence, "pre-packed" by stocks of knowledge and enable humans to avoid the time-consuming process of actively role-taking. Typifications of idealized roles are most frequent in structurally complex systems where (a) the rate of interaction with diverse individuals is high, (b) the duration of interaction is short, and (c) the level of inequality among interactants is high. Moreover, in interactions where extensive frame-taking (making), account-taking (making), claim-taking (making), and stage-taking (making) are unnecessary or not permitted by the macrostructure, then interaction with others as ideal types is more likely.

Role-taking can, therefore, be seen in more precise terms than Mead's (1934) emphasis on "assuming the dispositions of the other." It involves taking from stocks of knowledge certain types of interpretative patterns—namely, behavioral syndromes (both general role conceptions and their fine-tuned variants), conceptions of subjective states associated with these syndromes, conceptions of ideal types of roles, and criteria of verification/re-verification.

(5) *Stage-taking*. The stage-making activities of others require interpretation by using stocks of knowledge as screened by the generalized other to assess the "meaning" of physical props, staging areas, and relative positioning. In fact, these meanings are reciprocally related to other interpretative processes. On the one hand, initial stage-taking can provide a general interpretative scheme for understanding the frame-making, role-making, claim-making, and account-making activities of others. Such is particularly likely to be the case when the macrostructure determines the positioning of others, the types of staging areas available, and the distribution of physical props. On the other hand, when situations are less constrained and actors have more options in their transformation of frames, their movement across staging fronts, their use of props, and their positioning, then the meaning of the stage-making activities of others is less clear and usually depends upon an initial role-taking with the other(s), and at times, on account-taking, claim-taking, and frame-taking. The information provided by these other interpretative processes is often essential to understanding why a person is positioning him/herself in a certain way, why certain props are being used, and why movement to a front or backstage mode is occuring.

A Composite Model

In Figure 4, I have summarized this brief discussion of signaling and interpreting. This model represents an elaboration of the conceptual canopy provided by Mead and Schutz (see Figure 3) with concepts from more recent analyses of interaction.

As indicated by causal arrow (a), this model views stocks of knowledge as those interpretative patterns that enable cognitive deliberations to occur and, at the same time, provide broad interpretative schemes for such deliberations. As actors deliber-
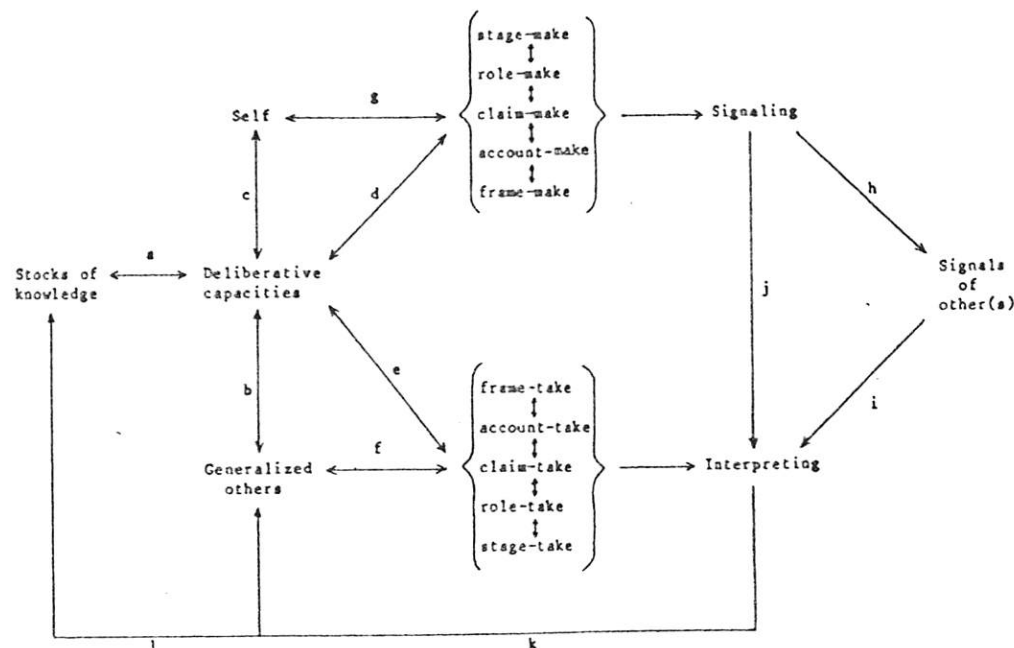
Figure 4: A Composite Model of Interactive Mechanics

ate, they invoke various generalized others which represent the application of stocks of knowledge to concrete types or classes of situations (arrow b), and in so doing, they provide a perspective for both signaling (arrows b, d) and interpreting (arrows b, e, f), as well as evaluating oneself as an object (arrows b, c). As arrow (c) emphasizes, actors see themselves as objects in situations; and by virtue of the standards of the generalized other (arrows b, c), they also make evaluations of themselves. The kinds of signals that one emits will, as Rosenberg (1979) has summarized, be greatly circumscribed by actors' efforts to sustain consistency in their self-conception and to maintain a sense of esteem (arrow g), while their interpretations of gestures will be filtered through the prism of their self-definitions (arrows c, e), especially as these are evaluated in terms of the standards of generalized others (arrows c, b; f, e).

The heart of the interaction process, however, is staging, role-making, claiming, accounting, and framing. I have tried to specify some of the relations among these during signaling and interpreting, but my analysis here is only tentative. The central point is that these processes are interrelated and further understanding of the mechanics of interaction will necessitate more precise delineation of the causal relations among staging, role-making, claiming, accounting, and framing. For my provisional purposes in this paper, Figure 4 simply stresses that individuals use stocks of knowledge as mediated by conceptions of self and as specified by generalized others to signal and interpret (1) the meaning of physical props, stage fronts, and relative positioning (staging), (2) the

subjective states and criteria for verification of the roles (role-making/taking), (3) the relevant norms, means-ends scheme, and criteria of sincerity (claiming), (4) the appropriate folk methods for sustaining a sense of a common reality (accounting), and (5) the definitional frames for circumscribing the substantive context of an interaction (framing).

As causal arrows (h), (i), (j), (k), and (l) underscore, signaling and interpreting along these five dimensions can be reflexive, in two senses. One is marked by causal arrows (j), (f) and (e) where actors interpret their own gestures; another is denoted by arrows (j), (k), and (l) where one's signals reaffirm generalized others, stocks of knowledge, and indirectly through a causal connections (a), (b) and (c), self-definitions. Causal arrows (h) and (i), however, make the processes of signaling and interpreting truly *inter*active in that one's signals are responded to by others. As others interpret gestures and use their deliberative capacities to create their own self-definitions and invoke what they perceive as the relevant generalized others, their signals become the basis of one's interpretative processes. These signals can either reaffirm, add to, or force changes in the generalized perspectives, stocks of knowledge, or self-definitions used to guide one's own signaling.

CONCLUSION

The composite model presented in Figure 4 is only an initial step in theorizing about interaction. It has, I feel, several virtues. First, it is focused and does not try to address all conceptual issues simultaneously. Other models and theories will be

necessary for a more complete conceptualization of interaction and micro-dynamics. Second, the model pulls together diverse traditions in a way that emphasizes either their convergence or interrelations. In a study of interaction, there has been far too much chauvinism and acrimony; what is needed is eclecticism. Third, the model highlights certain ordered relationships among its elements. The arrows in the model are intended to denote the crucial intersections of processes and to provide some initial guidelines as to where the interesting propositions about the relationships among elements of interaction are to be found.

But the model reveals a number of obvious deficiencies which can represent guidelines for the next conceptual step. First, what has been excluded needs to be re-inserted as variables in propositions about interaction. In various places, I have done this unsystematically in references to macrostructural constraints on signaling and interpreting processes. A more comprehensive analysis will view such forces as motives, socialization, macrostructural constraints, and personal biographies as variable conditions which determine the weight of, configurations among, the signaling and interpreting practices of framing, staging, accounting, claiming, and role-making/taking. Second, the arrows do not specify very much. They imply causality, but rather imprecisely. Another "next step," then, is to translate the arrows into more precise models and propositions that delineate the exact causal processes.

Thus, I am proposing a particular strategy of theory development: limit the topic to only one core process; examine diverse points of view on this process sympathetically and undogmatically; construct a simple synthetic or composite model; and then, and only then, try to (a) connect the elements of the model to what has been bracketed out and (b) elaborate upon specific causal processes. In performing (a) and (b), we should move from analytical models to propositions that state the conditions under which the elements specified in the model will vary (see J. Turner, 1985 and 1987 for a summary of this strategy).

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