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**CHAPTER 5**

**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CITIZENS AND SUBJECTS:**

**GENERALIZED OTHERS AND THE PATHWAYS TO**

**INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

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“It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.

One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”

W. E. B. Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (1994/1903)

“…the generalized other…(is)... a concept that has received relatively little scrutiny

and even less use in recent sociological inquiry.”

Clare Holdsworth and David Morgan *Sociology* (2007: 402).

“Crucially, causality does not flow from individual choice, nor from societal constraint.

Rather, causality happens in fields of social relationships where more powerful actors in the field, like suns in the solar system, exert particular influence on the structure of the field and courses of action. But at the same time, even the smallest person has some gravitational pull that can influence the chain of action.”

Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt *Relational Inequalities* (2019:227)

Symbolic interactionism is the most prominent social psychological theory in sociology, but explicit theories of social psychology have only sporadically been applied to political sociology. A quasi-Marxist theory has been most often been used, which states that a person’s position in the occupational structure or class structure creates their interests, which they then try to satisfy by joining and supporting a political party that represents those interests or their participation in a social movement in the case that party representation is inadequate. If no party or social movement supports their interests, they will withdraw from politics and participation by not voting or otherwise supporting political interests. If the fit is partial with a political party or movement, they may opt to become an independent. This type of theory has been used by a host of political sociologists including Seymour Martin Lipset (1981), Richard Hamilton and James Wright (1986), and Jeffrey Manza and Clem Brooks (1999). A Weberian twist to this includes status groups like gender, race, ethnicity and religion to the mix, but the “social bases of politics” remain the staple of research. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2016) add age in the form of generations, which goes back to Karl Mannheim’s work (1952).

There are three problems with the dominant approach of placement in the occupational structure of the economy determines interests, which John Levi Martin and Nick Judd (2020) refer to as GOFAT theory, or the “Good Old Fashion Action Theory” of politics. The solution to the new social psychology focuses on three critical points. **First**, this theory does not have much social psychology attached to it, especially since it does not say much of anything that goes on within people’s heads, other than people follow their occupational and demographic interests. **Second**, it has some face validity but not much depth in explaining why people in the same group often vote in different ways. A more elaborate way of saying this is that the crisscross of class and status groups often fail to tell us what might be going on and which category has precedence in which circumstances. For instance, should working class-white men be voting for the party that is appropriate for them (e.g., Democratic or Social Democratic Parties), or do they vote against that party because of another reason that seems to want to deny government funds and benefits to women and non-whites (e.g., Conservative or Republican Parties). Political advisors to politicians have drilled down on these categories with some success but the still largely have an *ad hoc* theory of social psychology often times relying on political ideology for a proxy of these social bases of politics.[[1]](#footnote-1)And **third**, as Harold Wilensky often said, “categories don’t act, groups act” in as much as class and status groups are really categories and not groups at all (90% or more of each category do not know each other and have never interacted).

Instead of a basic social psychology of politics that is based on the imputation of structural interests, my approach synthesizes theories that will present symbolic interaction and exchange theory to explain political action. Neither one is immediately useful to do this political job, so I will orient them toward politics in what follows.

This chapter uses W. E. B. DuBois’ insights of double- or multiple-consciousness, and proceeds in three parts. **First**, I examine symbolic interactionist theory and give its various parts a unified treatment, but at the same time emphasizing the generalized other as the pathway to groups and social structures. **Second**, I integrate interaction ritual chains and differential association into the fabric of the generalized other for the basis of creating continuous interaction, especially with choosing groups and identities. And **third**, I integrate theories of power and social inequality into the symbolic interactionist paradigm using the social exchange theory of power as dependence. The result is an expanded view of symbolic interaction and exchange theory in explaining the social psychology of political sociology, especially as it connects to inequality.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST THEORY REVISED FOR POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

In this section, I go over basic symbolic interactionist theory and then emphasize the neglected but central innovation of George Herbert Mead—the generalized other. After presenting an overall model of symbolic interaction including Erving Goffman’s front and backstage, I then show how this model leads to a theory of structure, which symbolic interactionists tend to avoid.

**The Basic Theory**

Mead (1934) presents a theory of social psychology that involves a theory of the mind and a theory of social interaction that produces a self.[[2]](#footnote-2) With a specific form of identity and purpose in life. I will present this in two stages: (1) the general version of the theory using some aspects of Erving Goffman and multiple selves in the process in this section, and (2) a version of the theory that gives much more emphasis to the generalized other as the building block of positive and negative group relations in the next section.

The first step in this section is the overall model which will be a bit different from standard accounts but builds on Jonathan Turner’s view of G. H. Mead (1988: 73-84) and Erving Goffman (1988: 86-101).[[3]](#footnote-3) In Figure 5.1, the overall process is described.

\*\*\*\*\* Figure 5.1 about here\*\*\*\*\*

Political sociology is largely an adult interaction rather than how child is socialized, so I will start with the self-concept already formed in item 1, but posit that we all have multiple selves that are often attached to the different network roles that we have in society. Our self as a parent may differ in many ways from our self as a manger, worker, or professional in our jobs.[[4]](#footnote-4) We may differ in our friendship groups. Each of these selves monitor situations in item 2 in order to determine what they need to do to survive and prosper in society. In doing so, the “I” in item 3 strategically determines what actions to take and more specifically selects different “me’s’ in item 5 to present in various appropriate situations. In order to make these presentations of self (Goffman), each person will “stage” in item 4 those presentations with various props, ritual sequences, specific scripts, and so forth using Goffman’s sense of dramaturgy. The presentation then ends with some specific types of action in item 6, and by means of Weber, the action may take place out of habit, following tradition, involving some emotion, and/or through some sort of calculation via various types of rationality (most basically through value or instrumental rationality) (Kalberg 1980).

Those performances in interaction with others (an audience) lead to their feedback to the “I” and “Me,” through the generalized other (i.e., Cooley’s ‘looking glass self’) and people react to this feedback via the generalized other in adjusting their future presentations of self in that same interaction and/or in future interactions. The generalized other is further constructed by each person in items 6, 7 and 8. The reactions or reflected appraisals have to be interpreted by the self or often the ‘I’ and they are accurate or somewhat biased in these interpretations. The “I” has a strong tendency to try to appraise other’s reactions in a positive way in order to reinforce self-esteem. However, as these biases may contradict further interactions, the generalized other is often corrected (“I thought you were my friend, but now I know otherwise”, or “I thought you disliked me, but now I realize I was mistaken”). Thus, in item 8, the generalized other feedback is selected, framed, and ranked for the “I” so that it can be correctly but iteratively perceived. These processes of the generalized other have been generally ignored by symbolic interactionists, although Margaret Archer (2003) with her emphasis on the “internal conversation” comes the closest to approximating it though she criticizes Mead’s description of the concept.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The generalized other as seen as the major innovation of George Herbert Mead’s social psychology. The “I” and “Me” had been seen in other theories (William James, for instance), but the generalized other was new. It is subject to a number of controversies. On the **one** hand, some say that the “other” is generalized so much that it represents a person’s unified view of how society, as a whole, views a person’s sum total of actions. As a result, the generalized other is the sum of perhaps thousands of feedback loops that give us an idea of how we should act in society. I contend that the generalized other is more context specific in that generalized others tend to develop according to network and role situations, not ruled by them, but socially constructed by each person. Hence, there are multiple generalized others that become entwined with multiple selves. Situations are neither unique, nor totally predictable. Instead, each situation is constructed according to the group and situational constraints.

The **other** problem with the generalized other is that some (Archer 2003) contend that the generalized other as presented by Mead can be seen as deterministic. We present a “Me” to others, and then the feedback tells us that we succeeded, we failed, or we were ignored. As a result, we more or less orient our future actions according to what the generalized other “tells us to do.” However, this erases the impact of the “Me’s” on the generalized other and makes the “I” a relative automaton or simply a mirror of the generalized other. This is also not the case. Clearly, the “I” in determining what “Me’s” to present may continue to oppose or persuade its audience and generalized other in another direction. There is variation as some people are ruled by what others think, and others, especially the mentally ill, may totally ignore the thoughts and reactions of others. But as Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and Dustin Avent-Holt say “even the smallest person has some gravitational pull” (2019:227). Some may be opinion leaders who sway their generalized other, and other’s hesitancy or reluctance may hold back a generalized other from strong reactions. Thus, the generalized other is subject to variations of agency and not an unopposable force.

Hence, the “I” is neither encompassing all of society in every interaction by an ‘overly generalized’ other, nor is the generalized other the ‘commander’ of every self through its deterministic pronouncements in the mirror of one’s actions. Nonetheless, the conventional view of symbolic interaction tends to downplay the generalized other and it is Mead’s great discovery of the social. But then it almost disappears from symbolic interaction theory and empirical practice. Everyone wants to talk about “the self” and even some jump to “identity” as if it were permanently imprinted upon one. In the next section, I will problematize the generalized other and expand its role in symbolic interactionist theory. Some symbolic interactionists, object to this and say why should you complicate a perfectly good theory, but I shall respond that one needs to delve more deeply into how people view others and construct their political selves.

Figure 5.1 may seem like it is complex with nine parts and many arrows, but most of the time people do not go through all of these steps. There are three distinct patterns that occur: totally reflexive, partially reflexive, and not reflexive. **First**, totally reflexive social action goes through all the stages in figure 5.1:

(1) (2) (3) (4)&(5) (6) (7)&(8)

In most cases the return look is to (3) with the ‘I’ re-evaluating the events and outcomes. In the longer and less frequent process, a person goes through the full sequence of thinking everything out by going back to first principles about the self in (1) and monitoring situations with care in (2). Further, the generalized other is fully thought out after the social act and framed according to different generalized others in terms of being positive or negative. This is a mostly rational process with the more formal rationalities (procedural and theoretical) but we should keep in mind that all actions still have emotions or traditions even though they may play a small part (Kalberg 1980). For example, when a white person is faced with the injustices of the ‘black lives matter’ movement and takes to heart the killings that occur, he or she may question “what kind of person am I?” They may then seek to create a different self that reconstructs their monitoring, presentations of self, and social actions; and after the act, they reconstruct their generalized other. And this process may require a number of interactions before one might be satisfied with the result. Some interactions may take place repetitively in the mind with what Margaret Archer refers to the “internal conversation”:

(1) (2) (3)

This ‘soul searching’ or ‘self and generalized other’ searching takes deliberation, thought and considerable care, but it does not actually present a self (e.g., get to stage 4 and 5).

**Second,** people cannot possibly go back frequently to first principles of the nature of their self. Since the decision-making burdens of the first process are great, they take short-cuts. Most of the time, people use partially rational and partially reflexive processes. This looks like:

(3) (4)&(5) (6) (7)&(8)

In this partially rational process people use practical and/or value-oriented rationality which is less taxing than procedural and theoretical rationality (Kalberg 1980) coupled with emotional and traditional action (Weber 1978). This is probably the most common form of social action with a moderate amount of thought in choosing social actions with some accounting for the reactions of other people and little or no re-evaluation of one’s multiple selves. For example, in making judgements about what political causes to contribute to, the ‘I’ rationally considers alternatives based on what they have done in the past. The ‘I’ selects the actions that generally satisfy their sense of self and generalized others that they interact with, and make a decision. Emotions and traditions are more involved. They take these short cuts to avoid the paralysis that Professor Chidi Anagonye in *The Good Place* experiences when he overanalyzes every moral situation he faces with the end result that he can never (until the end) decide. This, of course, equally infuriates his friends and acquaintances.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Third**, the non-reflexive position uses the most emotion and traditional action. It short-circuits many of the processes of deliberation and is a sense like operating on automatic. It is shown as:

(5) (6) (7)&(8)

This is more similar to Weber’s conception of habit or conventions. The ‘I’s role is minimal though it may be involved in some unconscious or subliminal way. The emotions and traditions tend to take over and the social action is either reflected in the generalized other or this stage can also be skipped. This response can go further as George Herbert Mead refers to it as the “fusion of the ‘I’ and the ‘Me’” that leads to stereotypes like nationalism, racism, sexism, and other automatic responses (actually, Mead only mentions nationalism but the extension fits his theory).

(3) (5) (6)

Nonetheless, we all have habitualized parts of our lives which we think do not require any extensive thought. How often have we driven to work without deciding about the route, and sometimes, not even remembering the route. Nonetheless, we can establish personal habits about cleanliness or driving, but should be extremely careful about habitualizing thoughts about whole categories of people or in new situations like the Great Recession of 2008 or Covid-19 in 2020 to 2021.

**The Multiple Me’s and Generalized Others as the Initial Route to Structure**

The generalized other is more complex and important than symbolic interactionists have previously thought. In this sense, I take more after W. E. B. DuBois concept of ‘dual consciousness’ and especially the fact that there are multiple generalized others and that they may be positive or negative. In other words, one generalized other might be friendly and supportive and the other might be hostile and threatening. The general model for the “Me’s” and the “generalized others” was shown in Figure 5.1. Most social psychology now recognizes that there are multiple identities involved with most people (Markus and Wurf 1987). Some view this as intrinsic to modernity, but using more conventional theory, as much as anyone plays multiple roles in society they develop multiple identities and ways of acting in those roles. In more symbolic interactionist theoretical terms, they view the generalized other as one item, but I view it as two items (7 and 8). In items 1 through 5, multiple selves monitor situations with the “I” choose multiple “Me’s” to present in different interactions with others. In item 6, I add the Weberian forms of social action in terms of emotional, traditional and rational action. Much social action is traditional in terms of habits and conventions. Emotional action often occurs with tradition, but it becomes intensified when the traditions are broken. In many cases tradition itself is a rational action, but new rational actions often come about when society is disrupted (Durkheim) but also disruption can be created by rational action (Marx). Rationality can also be viewed at various levels of abstractions. One might be rational at the substantive and procedural level in their personal actions but be at the processual or theoretical level when trying to pursue some larger political, economic or cultural change (Kalberg 1980; Janoski 1998).

The actions that result from each “Me” in item 8 are then fashioned into multiple “generalized others” or “GO’s” that are communicated back to the “I” from item 8 to item 3 or sometimes feedback can be entertained midstream in a performance of the “Me” from item 8 to item 5. Usually, the reflected appraisals of each “Me” take place in different situations often with different roles. So, a particular “Me1” is presented in one’s home with family, another particular “Me2” is presented at school, and yet another “Me3” at work with strangers or acquaintances. These performances are evaluated by the members of the group that they interact with, and each person constructs a positive, neutral or negative generalized other. These constructions can be quite variable with some being created in an accurate manner or others highly biased. In Figure 5.2, I examine four different people from studies that I have done with Chrystal Grey (2014) and Darina Lepadatu (2010).

\*\*\*\*\* Figure 5.2 about here \*\*\*\*\*

In an ethnography of assembly workers, Anna Gibson at a Japanese transplant in the US has positive GO1 which consists of the close relations with her team members with whom she works long hours as her the top generalized other closely followed by her larger group GO2. More generally, other men at work form a negative generalized other GO4 and women in her neighborhood and some of her family, especially men, criticize her for her long working hours. Janine Johnson, who advanced to a machine tool maker at a GM auto plant in the 1970s, finds both men and women at work highly critical of her to the point suffering catcall yelled out by men and a lack of cooperation from them in doing her job. The hours at work were not as long as the Japanese transplant so her family is grateful for the pay. So she had no positive generalized other at work at all (Lepadatu and Janoski 2008).

In a study of Afro-Caribbean and African American mobility, two academics Professor Burton Brenn and Provost Dorothy Smythe constructed their generalized others much like DuBois might expect (Grey and Janoski 2018). Professor Burton constructs an ‘identification others’ or “We’s” who are relatively positive toward him: GO1 consist of his Afro-Caribbean friends and family, and GO2 involves people in a multi-racial church to which he belongs. The other two are somewhat more negative: GO3 consists of white and Afro-American acquaintances who generally view his mobility as good or neutral. However, some whites are resentful of his success and they engage in negative reactions (GO4). Dean Smythe is similar in half the instances, but different in that she has a white generalized other that supports her (GO2), and black generalized other that criticizes her for “acting white” (GO3), which is an instance or *ressentiment*. The Dean’s first and last generalized others (GO1 and GO4) are the same as Professor Burton Brenn though her positive generalized other is composed of Afro-Americans rather than Afro-Caribbeans (Grey and Janoski 2018).

In DuBois’ terms, the generalized other is stark with the black and white generalized others, which are clearly opposed to each other with the incredibly divisive “color line” of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Yet this seminal theoretical opening shows the way for not only multiple generalized others, but also positive and negative generalized others for all people in society (Holdsworth and Morgan 2007: 408; da Silva 2008; Blumer 2004). Everyone who interacts in society faces people who promote or encourage them and others who oppress or oppose them. The degrees of promotion and oppression may vary quite a bit, but they are present in each of us and we generalize about these groups to negotiate our ways through life (Strauss 1978). This does not mean that people always interact in a strategic way that rational choice theory suggests. Instead, we understand which generalized other characterizes our interactions and engage in either Mead’s idea of ‘sociation’ with positive generalized others often with generalized exchange, or Goffman’s sense of ‘strategic interaction’ with competitors or negative generalized others with restricted exchange.

The route to structure comes from the fact that we know how our generalized others are connected to other people. There are two principles here. **First**, the positive generalized others consisting of those we have face-to-face or direct internet conversations with are generally in the range of small groups. But we know that these people have their own generalized others that extend to people we do not interact with often. Nonetheless, we may expect positive experiences with our extended kin or friends of friends. Similarly, with negative generalized others we surmise that we might not be welcomed. For African-Americans, expectations of interacting with indirect whites would be approached with a certain amount of caution. **Second**, there is a certain amount of overlap between our generalized others. We know some of the people in one generalized other may be in another of our generalized others. For instance, our neighbor may also be in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at our children’s school, and a workmate may go to our church, temple or Mosque. In tightly knit communities like recent immigrants, some may all live and work at the same locations. For others more dispersed in society, the overlap is less but nevertheless present to varying degrees. For this information, individuals construct a “sense of group position” (to be discussed in the next chapter in more detail) such that they form a sense of social structure of their direct and indirect network connections (Blumer 1958). For those who are socially astute or social mobility oriented, these mental maps of structure may be quite elaborate. For most others, it is a form of tacit knowledge that they do not formally erect but they may draw on it when someone considers cooperative social action (Polanyi 1967, 1991). Some aided by the media may extend this to a wider knowledge of class, race, gender or ethnic structures throughout society, but that would be for opinion leaders, activists or budding sociologists (Strauss 1991).[[7]](#footnote-7)

In the next section, I pursue the process of creating interactional structure more formally.

INTERACTION RITUAL CHAINS AND DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

For most citizens who are not political operatives, politics is not an all-consuming passion. They tend to get interested around election times, or when there is a controversial issue that piques their interest. Some things that people do are rather continuous like going to work every day or taking care of one’s family and their needs for food, shelter, and transportation. Politics is a secondary interest until there is some event or issue that comes to the fore. And for some people, even then, they are not interested in politics.

As discussed in chapter 10, political parties are voluntary associations whose members voluntarily join and the party itself does not engage people in their everyday decisions. They tend to mobilize around elections.[[8]](#footnote-8) Thus politically and continuously active citizens are the exception and most citizens may monitor the news for political information, but then act in terms of electoral cycles where the more active citizens contribute money, time (campaigning, organizing, protesting, etc.) in addition to voting. A few may be asked for their opinions in candidate’s polls and fewer still participate in scientific social surveys like the America National Election Study (ANES) or the General Social Survey (GSS) scholarly research. Yet most citizens have a fairly clear sense of where they stand on political issues.

In the following two sections, I shall look at how interaction ritual chains and differential association theory extend the afore described symbolic interactionist theory into political action at the group and structural level.

**Interaction Ritual Chains**

To present an adequate social psychological theory of how this is done, one has to enter into the group processes involved with symbolic interaction, namely, I have to put the generalized other into action concerning political issues and I will do this using Randall Collins’ theory of interaction ritual chains.

Using the generalized other (rather than the self), a citizen may present a political view that intrigues them and then field the reactions from their audience or generalized other or more simply their social network. This might occur at the dinner table with a family, and the parents may agree, disagree or let it pass. If challenged on the issue, the young citizen then may more cautiously survey their generalized other as to other people’s views on many issues. In early political socialization, sons and daughters mostly accept but some reject their family position on various issues (also, the two parents may be divided). Many children do conform even as they are not particularly interested, or do not understand the issues. As they become more interested with secondary socialization, they are often exposed to different points of view, which they then test out their opinions on their families and peer groups. Other significant groups are involved with religious organizations, which are often active on the restricted and generalized exchange spectrum, and neighborhoods which tend not to be active in giving advice about politics, but nevertheless provide a political context.

Into adulthood, citizens have more choices about their choices of occupations, education, neighborhoods, and so on. This process often occurs through a process of interaction ritual chains (Collins 2005).

\*\*\*\*\* Figure 5.3 about here \*\*\*\*\*

Each person enters into such exchanges with a certain amount of emotional energy, social capital, cultural capital, and a sense of opportunity. As they enter into an interaction with others, they meet people with various levels of energy, capital, and expectations and as a result of the interaction they leave it with altered levels of these factors. They may have pleasant interactions with high emotional energy and may sense some common levels of social capital. They seek further interaction with that person. Where they leave with lessened emotional energy (boredom, or unpleasant interactions) with blocked opportunities they may tend to avoid future endeavors. For example. Dorothy Day meets Peter Maupin and they strike it off with a lifetime of activist projects, one being the Catholic Workers Movement. Or other great collaborations may have occurred with Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward. I am telescoping this presentation, and numerous interactions are often necessary to get a full sense of the attitudes, values and sense of self of the other person, but in friendships these items reveal themselves although there may be fits and starts. Thus, through interaction ritual chains as developed by Randall Collins (2004), people figure out with whom they would like to interact.

**Differential Association**

From simple and repeated or interrupted interactions, citizens develop a stronger sense of attraction and seek out other people who belong to groups. I redirect Edwin Sutherland’s (1942; Matsueda 2001) theory of differential association by replacing “criminal” behavior with “political” behavior and retain the process nature of the theory and come up with nine steps of differential association concerning how people are joining a non-political group or association:[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. Political behavior is learned
2. Political behavior is learned in interaction with other people through continued communications;
3. The more intense learning of political behavior occurs in intimate or intense contact.
4. When political behavior is learned, this includes: (a) techniques of political action (debating, campaigning, giving money, becoming a leader, etc.).
5. The specific orientation of political motives is learned from conceptions of various political ideologies, usually from a political party.
6. A person becomes politically active because of their agreeing more with the political conceptions or ideologies of the group than not agreeing, which comes from interaction ritual chains. The greater the agreement, the greater the activity.
7. Differential association may vary in frequency, duration, and intensity (see emotional energy in interaction ritual chains);
8. The process of learning political behavior by the association with political, oppositional, or apolitical groups involves many different aspects of learning (e.g., in Germany the SDP, the Christian Democrats, or football clubs in FC München; or in the US the Democratic party, the Republican Party or sports bars rooting for ‘da Bears” football team, or a neighborhood book club).
9. While political behavior expresses general interest and values, this does not mean that it is expressed by these values since others who are apolitical may have the same interests and values (but perhaps did not have the same differential action pattern or the same basic socialization).

For example, in Figure 5.3, Sarah Delacourt, a college fresh person interacts between the Chi Omega sorority, which she finds attractive due to their seemingly friendly nature, cool social activities, and interactions with men in fraternities.

\*\*\*\*\* Figure 5.4 about here \*\*\*\*\*

But due to some of her values concerning religious communitarianism and sense of caring, she is also attracted to the Young Democrats on campus who express concerns for the poor and disadvantaged, and although not particularly religious have much in common with the Sermon on the Mount. She develops interests in the sorority through rush and finds some of the sorority sisters are quite conservative toward the poor making crude jokes blaming the victim, but many of the Young Democrats are rather hypocritical on these same issues and are simply ambitious for political connections and holding office. She finds that not many of the women in the Democratic group are sorority sisters and make disparaging remarks about them to which she responds that they are not all bigots and that’s there are many caring women among them. Though the process of differential association and interaction rituals chains, she will eventually decide to associate with one group rather than the other. It happens to be an election year, and the differences between the two groups tends to intensify though the groups do not formally interact with each other. Most people will choose one or the other group, though a few may see their mission in life as being a liaison between the two. Eventually, most will build their value system on one or the other group, may choose their major to fit more closely to one of the groups, and will then interact with other groups that are more congenial or in alignment with the chosen group. For instance, the sailing and tennis club may fit better for the sorority, and the ACLU and Amnesty International fit better with the Young Democrats. Again, most people are not looking to be political activists while a majority of students are interested in a lively social life in searching for a temporary or life-long mate. But the interaction ritual chains will be enacted through the larger differential association process through and between groups to create various political groups of participants and some activists. This is the beginning of social structure, and after this “in-group” processes develop through self-categorization and acceptance of many of the group’s norms (Turner 2005).[[10]](#footnote-10)

POWER AND INEQUALITY IN SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

This section interrogates the concept of power and its weak presence in symbolic interactionist theory, and then goes into the theory’s conceptions of inequality. It integrates a bargaining theory of power into symbolic interactionism, and alters the symbolic interactionist discussion of power by putting it into a context of social exchange and types of social mobility. The end result is a more nuanced and extended theory of power in society with elements of motivation at the individual and group level.

**Power in Symbolic Interactionism via Social Exchange Theory**

Symbolic interaction has a particular weakness concerning a concept critical to political sociology and that is the concept of power. George Herbert Mead does not say much about power in his social psychological theory, and when encountering the topic, the authoritative symbolic interactionist text by Sandstrom, Lively, Martin and Fine (2014: 177-184) after a very brief review of the concept largely embraces the social exchange theory of Richard Emerson (1962) that sees power as dependency.[[11]](#footnote-11) This theory is elaborated by Samuel Bacharach and Edward Lawler (1980, 1981; Cook and Rice ) as power being the inverse of the number of valued alternatives that one may have in the sense of not being dependent on the relationship with the other. Relative power is the difference between your dependencies as compared to the other, and the other’s dependencies on you. In a formula this might be:

Your Power = 1 / Other’s dependencies on you

The other’s power = 1 / Your dependencies on the other

Relative power in = (Your power) – (Other’s power)

a situation

One’s and the other’s alternatives are measured by the number of alternatives times their value, which is the value of the alternative times its probability.

In other words, if you constantly depend on another person for food, income, entertainment and shelter (e.g., a child to a parent, or a worker to the managers of a company town), while you supply none of these and other values to the other, then your other has a high amount of power over you since they could deny you these values. Exchange theory then leads to bargaining processes, which will be discussed more fully in chapter 9 on the macro-level.

There are some strong inclinations toward bargaining theory in symbolic interactionist theory. For instance, Anselm Strauss (1978; Strauss et al. 2017; Sandstrom et al. 2014: 185-86) speaks of a negotiated order and mentions bargaining. However, this negotiation is rather loose and not involved with a formal assessment of power. Not all interaction is bargaining, and if someone in our personal lives is constantly keeping score and pursuing the maximum goods and services in our relationships, we most often regard this person as a ‘taker’ who is too instrumentally interested in outcomes in a friendship relationship. However, when groups are involved in strategic action then these calculations, in as much as they can be made, become quite important. It is a further question of whether these negotiations or social bargains are involved with restricted or generalized exchange. Generalized exchange looks to the betterment of the group as a whole, while restricted exchange is about the individual gaining for themselves. However, Strauss does not go far with this conception of bargaining as it might appear in political action.

A symbolic interactionist who does directly confront symbolic interactionism on questions of power is Lonnie Athens (1992, 1997). He questions George Herbert Mead’s predication of symbolic interaction as being based on “sociation,” which is the general consensual pursuit of cooperate social relations. Instead Athens prefers to see the pursuit of power as the basic motivating force for human beings and their groups. While this more or less goes back to Thomas Hobbes and “the war of all against all,” we do not have to flip flop on the basic motivations of humans and see that we all are motivated by both love and hate, cooperation or conflict, or caring and violence. We do not have to trade caring for power, and for the most part, we can see these two forces as being consubstantial in society.

But Athens does point to a critical weakness of symbolic interactionism as he comes up with a contrary view of the “good socialization” process described by George Herbert Mead, which is the “process of violentization” thesis. In the end, I conclude that both Athens and Mead are right but both are also incomplete. When people engage in sociation often with generalized exchange they are interacting according to the process of ‘sociation.’ But when people engage in ‘strategic interaction’ they are following interaction through power, which may be conscious by tough negotiators or may have been socialized into them through ‘violentization.’ And further, there are processes in between. Nonetheless, Athens does present symbolic interaction with an initial approach to power, which this theory sorely needs.

**Theories of Exchange in Social Psychology**

There are two types of exchange that can be applied to symbolic interactionism. The **first** type is restricted exchange that is best characterized by market exchange whereby one gives money for some goods or services. The exchange is usually short (money paid for material objects, knowledge or personal services) and both parties are self-interested. Sometimes these exchanges are made more long-term, but they are carefully guarded by contracts assuring each party’s interests are protected. Much of this type of exchange is linked to rational action as per Max Weber’s concepts of rationality. The **second** type of exchange is generalized exchange. This is when direct reciprocity is not expected except in a rather indirect way. It is a form of group exchange where one person gives to another, who then in turn gives to a third person. The same would apply to group exchange. Generalized exchange is more community and group interested rather than self-interested.

Political sociology can use these exchange processes to show how various political interactions can be negotiated. In table 5.1, I present eleven different exchange relationships divided between restricted and generalized exchange, but I will only go over the main points.

\*\*\*\*\* Table 5.1 about here \*\*\*\*\*

In restricted exchange, there are six different types from individual to various types of group and societal exchanges (1, 3 to 6 in Table 5.1) (Ekeh 1974: 46-52; Janoski 1998: 77-82). **One** important type of restricted exchange involves an important time dimension (see 2 in Table 5.1). For instance, if the exchange takes place repeatedly over time, norms evolve about the relationship. Trust may develop. In another way, a gift may be given to the taker, but the giver extracts a promise of a favor in the future. Recall, the Mafia Don played by Marlon Brando in the opening scene of *The Godfather* taking care of an Italian father’s wish to revenge the shabby treatment of his daughter by some Anglo-boys. Afterwards, he says that no payment is necessary, but:

“Someday, and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do a service for me.

But until that day, accept this justice as a gift on my daughter’s wedding day.”

And you know that the funeral director will not only do it to repay his debt, but if he does not, the Don will most certainly take a pound of flesh.[[12]](#footnote-12) **Second**, there are individual to group exchanges whereby a group might give a loan to an individual, and then the group expects payment by a particular date. **Third**, there are individual to societal exchanges whereby an individual agrees to various terms with a larger societal group. For example, an individual receiving unemployment insurance promises to be ready and able to work, and to search for work and fail in order to receive the benefit. **Fourth**, there are two kinds of group-to-group exchange. These may be negotiated by a leader but the followers know the terms of the agreement and are quick to point out any violations. The two types are when the groups overlap or they do not. Exclusive group negotiations may be harder to maintain than overlapping negotiations. This type of exchange is favored by rational choice proponents and economists who see it as the paramount exchange that exists in markets. Economists would like to apply restricted exchange to all types of social exchange (e.g., Gary Becker’s rational account of marriages and partnerships, and also sociobiological theories that see couples maximizing their gene pools for reproduction).

In generalized exchange, there are five different types (Ekeh 1974: 50; Janoski 1998: 82-85). **First**, in chain exchange (item 7) one person gives to another who then gives to a third party, and this continues to include more and more people as in “pay it forward.” **Second**, there are individual to closed group and open group exchanges (items 8 and 9). These can be seen in birthday parties in a family (group to individual that is closed by family members) or birthday parties at work where the exact people in the group may be constantly changing as employees come and go. Group to group generalized exchange can occur also through mutually exclusive groups (item 10) or overlapping groups (item 11).

Generalized exchange was promoted by Malinowski’s Kula Exchange in *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific,* and by studies of gift exchange with specified shells as the gift. Also, Richard Titmus in the *The Gift Relationship* (1997) describes the difference between exchanging blood based on it being a gift or being paid for the donation. It is also discussed in a rather ethnomethodological form in Josh Pacewicz’s *Partisans and Partners* (2016), though the gift relationship large resembles these other generalized exchange forms. In it, gifts can be used to benefit the whole community through philanthropy, but they also may serve to create patrimonial relationships. For example, consider the following:

In Chapel Hill in the early 2000s, an African-American nurse promises to buy her daughter a dress for the prom, but her choice at a reasonable price at the department store is deemed mundane by her daughter. The daughter complains to her grandmother, who has been an underpaid domestic for many decades to a prominent old and respected family. The grandmother mentions the specific dress that the young girl wants at the most expensive boutique in town, and the scion she works for says, “I know the owner of the store; I can talk to her.” The grandmother then tells her granddaughter that the dress has been marked down by 70% of the original price so that it is the same price as the department store dress. The mother reluctantly buys the dress for the ecstatic daughter, but angrily tells her mother (the daughter’s grandmother) that the scion has “underpaid you for years, and that this is exactly what keeps us in our place.”

Similarly, Josh Pacewicz (2016) shows how the old rich partisans made philanthropic gifts to keep town members in their debt, but these donations are small fractions of their total wealth. But on the other hand, the one large factory owner who does not give to the community was ostracized from society and politics.

Restricted and generalized exchange relate to how generalized others are constructed. Most often, more distant others are in restricted exchange relationships. There is a bond but it is contingent on tit-for-tat exchange. Closer relationships like kin and close friends are more often in a generalized exchange relationship with a high degree of bonding in long-term relationships. However, there are some people who are always in the restricted exchange mode (e.g., what have you done for me lately?). Their generalized others will have fewer long-term relationships and rely on a constant influx of new exchangers. More recently, Monica Whitman (2021) has shown that a strong norm of reciprocity will have powerful effects leading to social trust and generalized exchange for the betterment of the group. However, a weak norm of generalized reciprocity (i.e., restricted exchange) will create weaker social bonds. We will refer to those who operate with more restricted exchange as opportunists in the next chapter on citizen selves.

**Social Exchange in Symbolic Interaction with Bonding and Bridging Capital**

Social exchange theory and symbolic interactionism are often thought of polar opposites, and in some ways they are. However, in this book, I find that they can be profitably put together or synthesized. A major difference between the two concerns how strategic people can be. Following Goffman and bridging Mead and Athens, there seem to be two modes of behavior: (1) a general form of sociation where people generally intend to get along with each other as friends and associates, and (2) a strategic form of interaction that looks more like bargaining behavior where one has a sense of seeking specific monetary or other gains. The two types of behavior have two different types of exchange. In every day “go along with the flow” and follow established norms of proper conduct, citizens pursue a form of generalized exchange whereby the good of the community is pursued. This generalized exchange does not demand immediate payback and helping one may lead to them helping another so that the initiator of the exchange does not expect immediate payback. The other form of strategic exchange is much narrower in scope and as a result it is called restricted exchange. Social exchange is more generalized exchange as one might pursue in one’s family or friend network. More market exchange, often among strangers, is restricted exchange where one expects immediate payback. Or if the exchange is to take place over a long period of time, perhaps for loans and bond purchases, the arrangement is firmly structured with a contract that covers many different aspects of the exchange.

Social networks of kin and association in social mobility settings can occur in different formats according to bonding and bridging capital. Here are four examples with disguised names except for the last one. **First**, Helen Hilton marries a musician who then becomes a factory worker. Her idea for social mobility is to work herself at the telephone company and maintain kinship and neighborly social relations. She informally entertains family and friends in a manner that reflects her idea of prevailing ‘respectable’ social norms of her community—nothing more and nothing less. **Second**, Beverly Johnson comes from an ethnic and lower-middle-class family and marries a man whose family has a prominent background. While her husband’s father dies soon after they are married, she entertains guests with the purpose of advancing her husband’s sales career in business machines. This involves two aspects of networking. Among her kin, she aims to keep the family together for over 50 years with parties with over 60 people. Among her husband’s business associates, it consists of being the “life of the party” and maintaining long-term friendships with business associates. While the women largely stay at home, the male members of this kin group help each other to gain high paying jobs within the same industry as her husband with one becoming quite wealthy. Eventually, they become upper-middle class by maintaining both their kinship and business ties by emphasizing positive family and business generalized others. **Third**, the eldest son of a middle-class family, George Wilson, becomes a personal injury lawyer and is quite successful. In one way or another, George convinces his three brothers and one sister to also become personal injury lawyers. The firm of Wilson and Wilson become quite successful, and eventually the younger brothers and two children who become lawyers then expand the business to six other states. Their motto, “Wilson and Wilson, For the People” dominates the airwaves on TV and the internet decrying the greed of insurance companies. They then become one of the largest legal firms in a 10 state area. And **lastly**, Joseph P. Kennedy was the son of a successful Irish businessman. Although Boston elites tended to discriminate against the Irish, some Irish social entrepreneurs become more powerful over time. Joseph married Rose Fitzgerald, the daughter of the then Irish Mayor of Boston. After a successful business and political career, he promoted his sons as politicians. Although the favored Joe Jr. died in World War II, Joseph Kennedy’s sons John F., Robert and Ted Kennedy had peak political careers. Rose Kennedy kept the family strongly united with frequent family gatherings (Patterson and Fagen 2020). One could make a similar comment about the Bush family as a political dynasty (Baker 2008).

Each one of these families utilized various aspects of generalized exchange in what they perceived as their social mobility prospects. All of the families used internal generalized exchange which can be referred to as bonding capital (Putnam 2000, 2020). Those families who engage in ‘bridging capital’ to go outside their kinship groups are even more successful in bringing their families more advancement in social mobility. Helen Hilton engaged in the least ‘bridging capital’ to higher social classes. Beverly Johnson combined bonding and bridging capital to maintain family solidarity and to advance her husband’s career (since the husband’s father died early, this limited greater bridging capital) both through the absence of the father and the tendency for widow’s sociality being restricted (i.e., there is no husband to promote and her lowered income makes the husband’s mother a bit downwardly mobile). And the Kennedy example, which of course is well known, shows how promotion can even lead to the Presidency of the United States.

This does not mean that all social mobility in families is tied to generalized exchange. There are also many examples of people gaining great wealth or political influence through more restricted exchange. For an auto example, Ford Motor Company has had many Ford family members running the company; however, General Motors has had only one Sloan in the form of Alfred P. Sloan who had no children and his foundation operates on the East Coast. However, if a family member ignores his brothers and sisters, he will need to make up for “bonding capital” with an extensive focus on “bridging capital” to a higher social class. Generally, the talents or genius for bridging capital of a rising executive will need to be stronger than those rising through bonding capital in family promotion.[[13]](#footnote-13) Also, similar processes can develop with a tight knit group of friends from high school or college. In network terms, these processes are more reliant on ‘strong ties’ than ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973).

**Inequality and Social Mobility in Symbolic Interactionism**

Michael Schwalbe and five others present a theory of critical interactionism on how inequalities are created in society, and these can also be related to social mobility. They see four factors as being important in the creation of inequality: oppressive othering, boundary maintenance, emotion management, and subordinate adaptations (Schwalbe et al. 2000; Sandstrom et al. 2014: 46-47; Reynolds 1987). Oppressive othering penetrates the generalized other of Mead and indicates that people may promote or justify their positions in society by providing “looking glass-self” messages to others that they are inferior, inept, unworthy or otherwise inferior to themselves. The purposes of these oppressions are boundary maintenance processes to indicate that the oppressors belong to a superior group and the subordinates belong to a less worthy group. The whole process of oppressive othering is linked to highly charged emotions on the part of both the oppressors and the subordinates. And the subordinates react to oppressive othering in a number of different ways. All too often, the processes of the generalized other are portrayed as ‘supportive othering’ such as mothers and fathers interacting with their children in the socialization process. Oppressive othering has been largely ignored as a general social process though labeling theory comes close to it. However, I want to move Schwalbe et al.’s view of inequality further in the direction of social mobility.

Schwalbe et al. (2000) provide a more nuanced view of oppressive othering by viewing different attributions with external and internal reactions from generalized others. This is presented in table 5.2 along with material from Jonathan Turner and Jan Stets (2004).

\*\*\*\*\* Table 5.2 about here \*\*\*\*\*

Reading across the table’s columns, the first three rows represent higher status persons, and the latter three rows are lower status persons. In **row 1** (items 1, 2 and 3) high status persons who feel that their status is based on ability engage in self-justified othering where they are validated, and they develop powerful virtual selves. These people are very self-confident and quite connected. In **row 2** (items 4, 5 and 6) high ranking people have largely inherited their rank by ascriptive principles and they rely on their traditional positions but may need to engage in defensive othering and internalization, In **row 3** (items 7, 8 and 9), some people have high rank due to bias and discrimination and they are quite insecure and very much subject to downward mobility. In their fearful position, they intensify their oppressive othering through discrimination with high intensity and emotion. Their internalizations are highly manipulative and can often be violent because they are located closest to the boundary between high and low status, and they know it. They must struggle to keep their high status.

In the bottom half of the table that describes low status, there are also three reactions. In **row 4** (items 10, 11 and 12), people with low rank view their social position due to their lack of ability, and they engage in accepting the other imposed upon them by higher ranking people. They have deference and may have shame, but they seek to avoid these emotions by building negative subcultures where they are accepted with their deficiencies. In **row 5** (items 13, 14, and 15) people may be of low rank because of accidents or bad luck. They largely do not see their bad luck as deserved but nonetheless “it is what it is.” They will often engage with higher ranked persons with cooperation and attempts at patronage and opportunism. They are not as subordinated as those with degraded status, and they may achieve some limited mobility. In **row 6** (items 16, 17 and 18) lower status persons with perhaps certain abilities and talents that they themselves recognize view their low status as being due to discrimination and bias coming from higher status persons. They engage in counter-othering which is the angry rejection of the imposed reflected appraisals of high-status people that intend to demean and reject them. They actively construct a generalized other that recognizes their abilities and rejects oppressive othering, and they often will create positive sub-cultures among other low status but talented people that reflect their own more positive views (through *ressentiment* which was discussed earlier). Their chances of positive mobility are greater.

This view of othering interacts with social mobility. The merit-based high-status persons and the low-skilled degraded low-status persons will most likely stay where they are in the social structure—one feeling superior and the other deferential. The middle category of high and low status persons could move up or down depending on the circumstances. But it is the high ranking but protected people and the low-ranking discriminated people who are the most likely to engage in social mobility conflicts. The merit-based elites may protect the less able elites, and the discriminated subordinates with abilities may encourage the deferential people with hope. These reactions will also relate to the processes of positive, negative, and neutral generalized others discussed in the previous section. The low-status people will have negative generalized others vis-à-vis the high-status othering persons. They will develop positive generalized others with the subcultures that they may produce. But again, the social mobility boundary is fought most between row 3 of the vulnerable high-status people, and row 6 of the discriminated against but talented low-status persons.

Differentiating these relationships gives meaning to positive and negative types of generalized others in the social mobility process. One might say that this looks a bit like Robert Merton’s theory of deviance (1938); however, the big difference is that Merton focused on blockages that exist but said little about the motivation and process by which they are accepted or overcome, and nothing about the emotions that they generate. Schwalbe et al.’s (2000) view of blockages goes beyond Merton to state that higher elites impose oppressive othering on low status people through emotion, discrimination, and self-processes of internalization or counter-othering. Thus, the social mobility process is not just a reaction to blockages, but it is a creative process of external valuation through generalized others, and internal identification through self-processes. Thus, social mobility is not just achieving skills by merit, but it is also about “self-work” or “personhood” about countering and converting elite processes of oppressive othering with generalized others.

However, theories of political sociology cannot assume unrelenting social mobility for everyone since most social mobility is relational. This means that for those who go upward on the social scale, some will go downward. And downward mobility is much more painful than lack of mobility. Consequently, it is also important to focus on the higher status persons who are subject to downward mobility because they will also be highly defensive, resistant and even violent. As we have seen with the Trump-base, many of these people state “I want my country back” and “Make America Great again.” While one might self-righteously declare them as unjustified, they do not agree, and they are a political force to be reckoned with. In a sense, they are saying “I want my social mobility back” or “I don’t want others to be rising above me with their own social mobility.” On the other hand, those on the bottom may make the claim that upward mobility has no effect on others at the top, but relationally, this is not the case.

FROM GENERALIZED OTHERS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS AND GROUPS TO SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

There are two transitions to larger structures. First, there is the move from generalized others to social networks and groups, and second, there is the move from social networks and groups to insitutions, structure and culture.[[14]](#footnote-14)

**The Move to Networks and Groups**

The social psychology of framing performances of the “Me” and shaping the messages coming back to the generalized other increases or decreases cultural capital, emotional energy and a sense of opportunities as people join one group or another. These presentations of self by the “Me” and their being shaped by audiences in the generalized other create “practices” over time. Practices are a combination of the various behavior and actions that people take in the world (Giddens 1984; Schatzki 1994; Shove, Pantzar and Watson 2012). Although I do not take the ontological approach of practice coming first (Shatzki 1994; Bem 1972), the term “practice” is a better choice than beginning with norms, beliefs and roles, which give some precedence to premature structures rather than social construction.[[15]](#footnote-15) Through interaction, practices create norms, roles and beliefs, but this is also done through the constraints and also opportunities that are provided by other people in each person’s generalized other. Some may willing comply with these external constraints but others may surreptitiously or directly battle against them. Practices, which are the behaviors exhibited in interaction, become more or less routinized since it is too much work to think through them with every interaction. As a result, they become routinized and guided by allegiances, alienation or disinterest in those others expressing constraints through the generalized other. Out of this may come patterns which may be called beliefs, norms and even roles, which intertwine with other’s beliefs, norms and roles to become organizations and institutions. If enough agreement is obtained we may have strong institutions and government with some social order. If enough agreement is not achieved, we may have fragmentation, conflict and even chaos (e.g. Iraq, Syria and Somalia during the recent disruptive periods in their histories). Thus, we do not have roles and institutions imposed on us. But also we are not left with Goffman’s dramaturgical theaters that do not add up to larger structures. With some social order, consensus obtain. With no social order, there may be much death and destruction.

**Emergence vs. Predictability:** In this shift to structure, one must be careful in the terminology used because it connects to highly differentiated theories on the freewill and determinism scale. It is easy to say that people form a self, attach themselves to groups, and then adopt the roles that determine their behavior, even with some resolutions of role conflict and role strain within a set of adopted roles. On the other hand, symbolic interactionism in Blumer’s version adopts an approach of emergent behavior and even self-perception theory saying that people act first with confused intentions and afterwards conclude why they acted the way they did (Bem 1972) and practice theory is not far behind this conception In table 5.3, I tentatively list these viewpoints toward emergent and predictable behaviors.

\*\*\*\*\* Table 5.3 about here \*\*\*\*\*

The most unpredictable are emergent behaviors (item 1) and the most predictable are the various determinisms including habitus (item 7). Many of these positions come from Max Weber (habit, convention, emotional action, tradition and rationality). However, roles presume an ontology that they exist in society, but the actor(s) who create them are somewhat vague. I maintain that such roles exist only in as much as a group promotes them such as religious organizations (family roles), employers (work roles), and political parties and the state (citizen and leader roles).

Instead of *a priori* roles, I would like to introduce a form of negotiated practice (3 through 6 in table 5.3). People negotiate their behavior (presentations of self as in “Me’s”) and then field feedback through their generalized others which may come close to roles. In some cases, this may look like role socialization or adoption. But in other cases, this may look like role resistance. In this second sense, people’s practices are more like role evasion. Many times at work in a factory, I have seen some workers ‘work hard” at “not working or “evading work.” While some might see this as resistance or rebellion, it was rather that they simply did not want to exert the effort to work (i.e., simple laziness). For example, Wally in the Dilbert comic strip evades as much work as possible much like the aptly named Albert Dolittle in *My Fair Lady*—“The Lord above made man with an arm of iron, but with a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck, someone else’ll do the blinkin’ work!” Or look at the middle-class parenting styles over time of the “Just go outside and play” of the 1950s and 1960s, to parents who protect their children’s in driving them to sports, music lessons, and generally approximating if not being ‘helicopter’ parents. Upper-class social leaders may attempt to impose “etiquette” and specific rules for social behavior, but even there we have a few upper-class evaders and disrupters.

Thus, the position I espouse here is that roles exist in as much as groups try to impose them, but people and their generalized others negotiate these roles. On the other hand, there are purposeful role and rule breakers such as Donald Trump and Charles de Gaulle who engaged in ethnomethodological breaching experiments as they break roles and with their norms on a regular basis with both being termed ‘authoritarians’ (Black 2020; Fenby 2013). And many times, they seem to have an overall goal, but their immediate actions are “by the seat of their pants” or according to practice or self-perception theory. Yet others follow roles and rules assiduously. Or concerning intentions, Lyndon Johnson proclaimed in school that he would be president someday, but Angela Merkel who seemingly fell into the role of being Chancellor through chance but with some ruthlessness are certain points in time (Caro 2012; Qvortrup 2016; Mushaben 2017). Other opposites are Thomas Jefferson who sought the presidency, and Ulysses Grant who never imagined that he would be a politician much less a two-term president who implemented reconstruction (Wood 2009; Chernow 2017). Thus, my position is that there is great variance in practices vis-à-vis any roles that might be said to exist, and I see “practiced roles” which are followed, evaded, adjusted and sometimes totally breached. But in any case, people must encounter, shape and make-sense of their *milieu* through their generalized others.

**Phases of Group Formation:** From this modified position on norms and roles involved with practices, there is a four-part group formation and social network process: family, school, work, and private associations, especially political parties. **First** of all, most humans are birthed into a group called a ‘family.’ This group has specific roles—mother, father, son, daughter, grandmother, grandfather, etc.—that are negotiated and variable. However, they are reinforced by other kin (e.g., you are a great or terrible mother or father, or dutiful, spoiled or ungrateful child). Politics may be discussed at the dinner table or on car trips, and the sons and daughters become aware of their parent’s political positions before they know much about policy. These roles are later reinforced by schools, churches, mosques or temples and by neighbors (F1, G0), but they are strongly mediated by the family.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Second**, most children go to school. Within their familial constraints, children negotiate informal friendship networks which then tend to achieve greater power than the family over the teenage and young adult years. This is somewhat described by Randall Collins (2002) interaction ritual chains (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). A well-noted finding is that during this period teenagers may rebel against their parent’s political positions though this can be slight to catastrophic. In sociological parlance: initial or primary socialization gives way to secondary socialization outside the family. During this period in middle-school and high school student may belong to various youth groups and sports teams that are life training or quasi-preparatory membership for more serious group roles where they may have to conform to make a living at work and form their own family. Thus, this first stage is formal group one to social network one (G1 to SN1).

In the **third** phase, most young adults go to work, which can overlap greatly with the initial social network where friends follow each other to work (or not), young people join formal groups that employ them in trading friendship for group roles in providing goods and services for a wage. At work they generally perform in a specific way, which may be tightly or loosely coupled. If they are too loosely-coupled they may be fired, simply not promoted, or they may become independent contractors or entrepreneurs. Within these more formal roles they meet many others and through their interactions with them they form informal social networks based on positive and negative generalized others (Homans 1950). Thus, they move from formal group two to informal social network two (G2 to SN2). The process may be reversed in some cases where the first social network of friends and acquaintances joins a firm or government agency and they precede the second group’s informal networks. However, they most generally encounter new people they incorporate into positive or negative generalized others. The process may also occur more categorically with SN1 not being the same people as SN2, but the same gender, racial, ethnic, or religious categories may inhabit the work groups presenting the possibilities for ties among more or less homogenous groups.

In the **fourth** phase, a smaller but still substantial percentage of people form an attachment to political parties. This results in citizens forming positive and negative generalized others based on political agreements or disagreements. Based on positive generalized others supporting one political ideology or party over another, citizens in these social networks and work groups may individually argue for the positions of their favored political policies or positions, contribute money to political parties, actively campaign for a candidate, or even become an official in a party (e.g., precinct captain). Discussion in social networks whether in or outside of work most often is not frequent, but it tends to be intensified during elections campaigns (especially for presidents, senators and representatives) and in the midst of crises such as wars, economic downturns, riots and protests, and other salient events. Each persons’ political identity then becomes formed (see chapter 6 for the conditions for switching identities).

At this point we can integrate social identity and social categorization theory that is clearly focused on how individuals form, encounter, join and accept certain groups. The theory was formulated by John C. Turner in European and Australian psychology.[[17]](#footnote-17) The theory works with the “I,” and “Me” but instead of a generalized other it uses ‘We’ and ‘They,’ which is not quite as precise but still quite similar (Haslam, Reicher and Reynolds 2012; Reynolds 2018; Turner 2006). However, its important contribution comes in how people have a propensity to form groups, both in-groups and out-groups. So they do not just join a group (as in differential association), but they live within groups to varying degrees and adopt large amounts of their values, norms, ideologies and in some cases roles. Social identity is formed in groups (composed largely of framed generalized others) that may be rational, emotional and traditional in various ways. Individual members categorize their identities as influencing, conforming, and altering those group identities. Thus, individuals are active vis-à-vis their group memberships, but they are also influenced by them. Venturing further into prejudice theories, individuals do not see group malleability as a problem because group change can be a positive force for society and not just degradation (Reynolds et al. 2016). Thus, group membership not only creates personal identities, but also forges a social identity. This goes beyond just focusing on one’s personal self.

Workplaces with citizens being constrained by organizational rules, norms, and organizational vocabularies but also facing change are the forges of inequalities at their most formative stage (Simon 1947, Perrow 2014). In their award-winning book, Daniel Tomaskovic-Devey and Dustin Avent-Holt (2019) show how relational inequalities are created inside organizations, which are not the only venue for inequalities but they are the most important sites for exploitation and social divisions since they involve concrete wages/salaries and statuses. Accordingly, organizations generate resources (monetary, cultural, social, etc.) that some employees can obtain and others cannot. These more skilled, privileged or connected employees make legitimate claims for continued access to these resources (e.g., higher pay, promotions, high prominence, and status recognition). Some employees are “othered” as less competent and even degraded (Schwalbe et al. 2000; see the previously discussed Figure 5.2 that describes the othering process in detail). These othered employees are limited or prevented from accessing organizational resources, and sometimes they are fired. For instance, GE under Jack Welch fired the lowest performing 10% of its workforce each year, and Amazon does the same for its lowest 6% (Long 2021). This process of “othering” operates through Max Weber’s processes of “social closure” (1978), thus contributing to their negative generalized others and creating “othered” groups of employees often implying that their characteristics in the general population are also less valued (i.e., often implying that blacks or women in general simply cannot do the job).

The more skilled or privileged others make many of the organizations resources their own, and in the process “exploit weaker actors in production and exchange relationships” (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019: 6, 107-133; Royce 2018). As Charles Tilly explains,

“Exploitation… operates when powerful, connected people command resources from which they draw significantly increased returns by coordinating the efforts of outsiders whom they exclude from the full value added by that effort” (1998: 10).

The mechanisms for gaining privileged access are in the “relational claims-making” processes that is inherently interpersonal and negotiated (2019: 162-194), and they rest on the persuasive use of cultural, social, violent (physical force or police power) or symbolic capital (see Figure 3.1). Advantages in these cultural, status and material resources are distributed through a created ‘legitimacy’ in the distinctions of ownership, occupation, education, citizenship, gender and race. The categorical distinctions of class and status are the basis for “claims-making” that is organizationally-based and institutionally-supported, and then amplified by whatever skills the privileged may possess. Thus, organizational and institutional fields are influenced by categorical/ascriptive and earned/achieved forces. However, the success or failures of particular employees are not deterministically formed, but constitute part of “what is possible” (Foucault 1999:92; 1998). It is up to the actors who may be merit-based high performers or ascriptively-protected elites who just hang on their status to use their tools and resources through interaction ritual chains to invent local strategies or follow dull patterns of action. In this way, “relational inequalities” are created in labor markets and organizations with a great deal of closure but not hermetically-sealed as a certain amount of circulation of elites is allowed. Citizens initially advantaged by skills and/or more experientially-advantaged in understanding and using organizational resources gain power in the organization and in labor markets, both internally and externally.

**The Move to Social Structure and Culture**

From social networks and organization, I move to social structure, which has unfortunately lived a highly influential but static life in theory. The repetition of schemas, rules, roles, rituals, and accessing resources in groups and social networks provides the basis for institutions and then structures. The results of this patterning create the impression that social structures of capitalism, the state, family, the legal system, the education system and so forth are rather rigid, and a “social cage” or “habitus” for citizens.

However, William Sewell Jr. (2005: 139-142) emphasizes the agency of individuals in social networks and small groups to constantly change these patterns to support, alter and sometimes dismantle these structures. He provides five rules about structure in order to prevent the reification of this term. **First**, there are a multiplicity of structures, and **second**, they frequently overlap or intersect. For instance, trade unions, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the courts all play a role in employee protection. **Third**, schemas as individual roles and strategies of knowledge about structures and culture are highly ‘transposable’, which means that they can be altered when structures conflict or underperform. This enables a high degree of agency which may be used to support, supplant or abandon specific structures. For instance, individuals need for information has largely abandoned newspapers in their print form and moved on to the internet even though many are less informed because of the shift. **Fourth** and **fifth**, resources are often unpredictable and can have multiple meanings (polysemy). Sewell (2005: 142) sees resources as embodying cultural schemas, and cultural schemas implying various uses of resources, which relates to my discussion of political economy and culture in the first chapter. He states that “Any array of resources is capable of being interpreted in varying ways, and therefore, of empowering different actors and teaching different schemas” (2005:142). The result is that at particular points in time within given contexts, certain actors are able to trigger agency to transpose schemas and use resources to change structures, and in the process, to create a new array of schemas and distribution of resources. These changed structures then are subject to these five principles again as initiators try to maintain and defend these new structures against other conservative or new change agents. Nonetheless, the structures of inequality provide general though malleable constraints on action.

I would like to push this a bit further. Between individual and small group action there is a transmission phase whereby practices by themselves or in and around roles are transformed into patterns, repertoires and organizations.

\*\*\*\*\* Figure 5.5 about here \*\*\*\*\*

At the top of the figure are the more disconnected aspects of behavior. Societies differ in the transmission of behaviors into structures. Some societies at certain times have loose social structures. People’s practices tend to skirt around attempts to put them into roles with norms, and they show very high variation in their adherence of roles, and even the existence of roles may be questioned. Many parents are responsible to their children, some are hit-and-miss, and others abandon the role. Some workers attempt to follow the rules and others evade them. A large percentage of citizens willingly pay their taxes while in other contexts citizens will do their utmost to avoid taxes and hide taxable income. Hence there is a very high amount of variation in behaviors or practices. In a tight social structure, most people follow what they believe roles and norms to be. Sanctions are stronger both informally (social pressure) and formally (state or organizational sanctions. Practices in the first instance do not congeal into common repertories of action, and practices in the second instance create concrete structures. Further, these processes may change over time in societies. The transmission of practices into structures is a process that occurs at different levels and in different stages that depend on imposing social closure. Individuals in their social interaction will have commonly held private beliefs without action, commonly held expressed beliefs with mild action, strongly held beliefs with shallow action, and firm beliefs with frequent action. The more people hold common beliefs and take action, the more organizations and movements will be guided by those beliefs and behaviors. This will lead to more social closure for groups and organizations, and these groups and organizations may or may not coalesce into larger movements or organizations. This is where structure is created.

However, structure is not automatic or is looser than one might expect. Practices may be highly individuated or patterned behaviors. The movement of practices to actual roles, which are more tightly constructed, may or may not happen. And sometimes there may be tightly coupled practices into roles in one areas (students or employees) while loosely coupled in other areas (religions neighborhoods, citizens with patriotism, voters, etc.). For example at the societal level, US Americans and to a lesser extent Germans tend to pay their taxes (0.05 and 1.9% of GDP tax evasion rates from 1999-2010), whereas Italians (4.0%), Greeks (4.8%) and Mexicans (6.8%) are noted for much higher levels of tax evasion (Buehn and Schneider 2012, Tables 3 and 4). Within each of these countries, beliefs in merit, democracy and trust in government promote paying taxes, which involve generalized exchange, while libertarian ideologies avoid citizenship duties and obligations like paying taxes with preference for atomized liberty and restricted exchange.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The practice-role channel may be more analogous to the interweaving, entwining, and interpenetrating connections of behavioral practices than any direct transmission. Practices combine more like the twisting, splicing or mediated behavior rather than the old functionalist idea of everyone falling into roles though the ideas of role strain and role conflict are helpful. Thus practices may be neutral toward the entrainment of roles, sometimes finding commonly and connections and at other times being resistant to much generalization and consensus. Political, economic and cultural movements are then moments when power can be used and expended to move a sufficient number of people into the intertwining of practices that create some aspects of change or efforts to resist change. And in large part, these movements are the intertwining of people’s positive generalized others, often in response to some negative generalized other that may be domestic or foreign.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to much of symbolic interactionism and social psychology, which largely ignores the generalized other, this chapter has presented a very much revised theory of symbolic interactionism stressing the importance of the generalized other that sees this concept leading to structure, boundaries, dominance/subordination, and many other issues. All is not the ‘self’ or ‘identity’ which seemingly presents an overly self-determined social psychology. Much of identity of self-formation comes from constraints, and it is through the generalized other that these constraints come from. As Marx says in the *18th Brumaire*: “Men (i.e., humans) make their own history,… but” not under conditions of their own choosing (1978: 595). These parts of the self and one’s contexts are put into a comprehensive model of social psychology that involves both Mead and Goffman in staging the “Me” and framing the “Generalized Other” in a complex but non-deterministic theory of the formation of the self through presentations of the “Me” and framing social reactions through multiple “Generalized Others.” Each person then engages in relations with their generalized other to create friends, acquaintances or enemies, and through interaction ritual chains and differential association, people develop and shape their generalized others into positive and negative forces in their lives.

This then leads to joining or avoiding groups that then lead to the meso- and then macro-structures and social actions we observe in nation-states as a whole. This was followed by a delineation of generalized and restricted exchange and the concept of “oppressive othering” in the process of social mobility (*al la* Michael Schwalbe’s work). The process is continued through Randall Collins’ concept of interaction ritual chains that are then embedded into Edwin Sutherland’s conception of differential association that shows how individuals may choose to join or reject organizations or groups based on their social, cultural and human capital. This process is then put into an organizational setting where inequalities are more firmly created. In the larger political system this involves “chains of power” whereby different hierarchical levels are linked through power networks. These are often “long hierarchical chains” that are embedded in networks and institutions that often intersect (Reed 2020: 4-5, 56-57).[[19]](#footnote-19) The result is a sophisticated social-psychologically created process of inequality that then provides the basis for politics to be more fully discussed later.

The approach I follow uses the generalized other to refocus political sociological work and especially social network analysis in two ways. **First**, it demonstrates that social network analysis need to decompose within the “self” between the “We’s” and the “They’s” of multiple generalized others. Consequently, self-work is inherently political and social network analysis needs to make these distinctions. And my discussion of Schwalbe et al. (2000) shows that inequalities are often produced by the iteration of low and higher status inequalities are often produced by the interaction of low and higher status persons who defend or advance their positions in the multiple generalized other oppressions, subordination, defensiveness or counter-othering in many different every-day conflicts. Using this theory to trace the differences in generalized others provides a more theoretical approach to network analysis that I call “theoretical net-work,” which is developing more substance for social networks and avoiding an over-reliance on methodological network concepts (e.g., centrality in a generalized other that is not differentiated by positive, negative and ignored divisions).

**Second**, the “We-They” of the generalized other is often a battle over truth, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. A person views their position in multiple generalized others as a contestation about reality: to accept the messages sent by different multiple generalized others, to reject these messages as unacceptable, or to persuade others of your negotiated revisions of reality are expressed these reflected messages. Some people just accept what people reflect back into their looking glass selves (Archer’s criticism of Mead’s determinism). Other people will be professional rebels who reject messages from multiple generalized others as they present counter-narratives, which risks being labeled ill-mannered, mentally ill or paranoid (e.g., the alternative realities of schizophrenics, bipolar patients or the Don Quixote complex of tilting at windmills and nonexistent giants). Or they may be viewed as a dangerous rebel. A third group of people will seek to negotiate their position in multiple generalized others by moderately reframing certain messages to improve their positions vis-à-vis others. When someone is defending their “identities or selves,” they are really manipulating reflected messages from and to others in the form of more strategic interaction. Some of this may be in acquiring new evidence and other parts may be in “rationalizing’ or manipulating old evidence (e.g., motivated reasoning and conspiracy theories). This may also involve moving from one group to another as these negotiations are the social psychological battle-ground for moving from one group to another. People are accepting or pushing the line of reality in multiple generalized others back and forth. These are powerful negotiations over identities (I am a good person or bad), emotion (I have been cheated or helped), and reason (reality is here and not there). But the frames are multiple and signed on multiple generalized others, and they often differ according to restricted and generalized exchange as people may shift from sociated to strategic interaction.

In the next chapter I look at how this social psychology operates more politically in groups with opinion leaders, citizen selves, and social mobility.

**Table 5.1: Types of Restricted and Generalized Exchange**

***Individual to Individual Individual to Group Group to Group***

***Restricted*** 1-Singular 3-Group 5-Overlapping Groups

***Exchange*** Person 1 to person 2 Person 1 to Persons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to

persons 2, 3, 4, 5 Persons 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

2-Multiple: 4-Societal 5-Mutually Exclusive

Person 1t1 to person 2 t1 Person 1 to Persons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to

Person 1t2 to person 2t2 Persons 2 through 100 Persons 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Person 1t3 to person 2t3

***Generalized*** 7-Chain 8-Closed Group 10-Mutually Exclusive Groups

***Exchange*** Person 1 to person 2, Person 1 to group 1 Persons 1, 2, 3, 4 to

Person 2 to person 3, consisting of 2, 3, 4 5; persons 5, 6, 7, 8;

Person 3 to person 4, Person 2 to group 2 Persons 2, 3, 4, 5 to

Person 4 to person 5, etc. consisting of 1, 3, 4, 5 persons 9, 10, 11, 12

Person 3 to group 3

consisting of 1, 2, 4, 5

9-Open Group 11-Overlapping Groups

Person 1 to persons Persons 1, 2, 3, 4 to

2 to 5 persons 2, 3, 4, 5;

Person 2 to persons Persons 2, 3, 4, 5 to

1, 3 to 6 persons 3, 4, 5, 1

Person 3 to persons

1, 2, 4,m 6

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Sources: Janoski 1998: 95-101; Ekeh 1974.

**Table 5.2: Inequality and the Generalized Others (GO) based on Self-Perceptions.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***Attributions of Inequality External Valuation Internal Identification***

***Of Generalized Others of Generalized Others***

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Row 1:**

*1-Merit-based Status: 2-Self-justified Othering: 3-Powerful Virtual Selves:*

High rank due to ability Validated rank of GO with Self based on confidence, positive

or entitlement pride, satisfaction, or arrogance. emotions, and high self-esteem.

**High** **Row 2:**

**Status** *4-Ascriptive-based Status: 5-Defensive Othering: 6-Defensive Internalization:*

High rank due to ascription Ambivalence and uneasiness Positive GO and self-based on

luck, or family about own rank of compared to ambivalent status with some

those of lower status. defensive emotions.

**Row 3:**

*7-Ascriptively being Protected: 8-Oppressive Othering: 9-Manipulative Internalization:*

High rank due to supported bias Fear of losing high rank with GO and self-based on repression

and discrimination against others guilt, anger and rectitude of others (rare conversions to other

about GO side with alternate GO)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Row 4:**

*10-Degraded Status: 11-Accepting Other’s Othering: 12-Creating Negative Subcultures:*

Low rank due to the lack of Acceptance of imposed and Negative GO based on deference

personal or group ability or talent. and superior GO of high-status and respect for authority, and low

based on deference and shame. self-esteem often involving deviance and dropping out.

**Low Row 5:**

**Status** *13-Group Subordination: 14-Defensive Othering: 15-Adaptational Othering:*

Low rank due to luck, Acceptance of superior GOs and GO and self-based on trading

ascription, or chance ambivalence and anxiety about power for patronage or “forming”

the GO imposed on them. sub-cultures with opportunism.

**Row 6:**

*16-Perceived Discrimination: 17-Counter-Othering: 18-Creating Positive Subcultures:*

Low rank due to discrim- Angry rejection of imposed GO GO based on active resistance and

ination and bias from others. and construction of positive interpretation of one’s own group.

alternative GO. Seeks individual or group social mobility

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

SOURCES: The structure of this table draws upon figure 7.2 in Turner and Stets (2004) and the quoted terms come from Schwalbe et al. (2000).

NOTE: This table illustrates tendencies and is not intended as a procrustean bed of categories. For instance, some lower status groups that are resigned (14) may also engage in resistance (17 and 18). And many low-ranking groups with few talents (10) may lead moral and self-respecting lives with positive GO’s based on their abilities (14 and 15). The same points apply to people in high status groups.

**Table 5.3: The Theoretical Range of Behaviors from the most Unpredictable to the Most Deterministic**

*Unpredictability in Loosely Coupled Societies:*

1. Emergent and unpredictable behavior al la Herbert Blumer’s radical symbolic interactionism.
2. Temporary routines and changeable conventions (Weber)
3. Practices that can be established and then revised (Shatzki)
4. Emotional action (Weber) which ranges from the unexpected to predictable outbursts.\*
5. Rational deliberation which can be predictable but change with context and new evidence

(Habermas)

1. Roles that have considerable consistency from family (mother, father, children) to organizations (managers, professions and workers with specific job descriptions). This also includes role sets with role conflict and role strain (Merton).
2. Habitus as a social change, or class, race, gender or cultural determinisms (Bourdieu).

*Predictability in Tightly Coupled Societies:*

NOTE: \* It is difficult to place ‘emotion’ with in this range of behaviors with some emotion being predictable and other emotion being unexpected and emergent.

**Figure 5.1: A Model of the Parallel Process of Self Formation and Social Action**

**(4) Staging:** creating, preparing, & adjustingthe ritual (cultural scripts)

*Objectifying the single ‘me’ path*

**(6) Social action**: Social interaction with others:

- habit, tradition

- emotion

- reason (practical, procedural, value, or theoretical)

**(2) Monitoring:** Monitoring and interpreting of situations and events at work, home, and elsewhere

**(3) The I**: Strategic deliberation in choosing to act.

1. **(1) Multiple selves:** Self’s perception of material, survival, & social identities:
2. - Self 1
3. - Self 2
4. - Self 3

**(5) The Me’s** or presentation of selves:

- Me 1a, b, c

- Me 2a, b, c

- Me 3a, b, c

Using various resources

**(8) Framing:**

-***Selecting*** the

people in the

generalized other

- ***Framing***the

ideas &

behavior that

bring them

together.

- ***Ranking*** gen-

eralized others

**(7) Social construction of generalized others**: Creating generalized others based on performances of various Me’s:

- GO 1 based on Me 1 a,b,c

- GO 2 based on Me 2 a,b,c

- GO 3 based on Me 3 a,b,c

*Multiple ‘me’s contributing to ‘generalized other’ paths*

**Figure 5.2: Comparisons and Transformations in the Generalized Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. **Japanese Transplant Automotive Assembly Plant and Subcontracted Supplier:**

Anna Gibson, a White Woman on the line Janine Johnson, a White Woman on the

at a Japanese Transplant toolmaker at a GM Plant

Identification others

GO1 = Team members **We**  GO1 = Women at work

GO2 = Family and Friends GO2 = Family and Friends

Interaction others,

or Virtual others

GO3 = Women at work GO3 = Team member

GO4 = Men at work GO4 = Men at Work

**They**

Valuation others, or

Audience others

1. **African-American and Afro-Caribbean Mobility Types of Generalized Others**

Burton Brenn, anAfro-Caribbean Dorothy Smythe, an African-American Ph.D. and College Professor Ph.D. Professor, and Provost

Identification others

GO1 = Afro-Carribean **We** GO1 = Afro-American friends

| ▲ friends and family and family

GO2 =A multi-racial American GO2 = White staff and friends in church favor of black upward mobility

Interaction others,

Acquaintances

GO3 = White and Afro-American GO3 = African-Americans who

acquaintances in favor of feel that she is not black enough.

upward mobility

GO4 = White discrimination **They** GO4 = White discrimination

and prejudice at work Valuation others, or and prejudice at work

Audience others

SOURCES: Lepadatu and Janoski 2010, and one other interview; Grey and Janoski 2012.

NOTE: The names are pseudonyms.

**Figure 5.3: Inserting Social Interaction into Interaction Ritual Chains (Collins 2005) and showing Sense of Opportunities, Cultural Capital and Emotional Energy**

**Person 1:** Sarah=20 total

Sense of Opportunities=8

Cultural Capital=6

Emotional energy =6

**Person 3:** John=14 total

Sense of Opportunities=6

Cultural Capital=4

Emotional energy =4

Interaction Ritual 2

**Person 3:** John=14 total

Sense of Opportunities=4

Cultural Capital=4

Emotional energy =6

**Person 1:** Sarah=4 total

Sense of Opportunities=0

Cultural Capital=3

Emotional energy =1

**Person 2:** Beverly=6 total

Sense of Opportunities=0

Cultural Capital=4

Emotional energy =2

Interaction Ritual 1

**Person 1:** Sarah=8 total

Sense of Opportunities=2

Cultural Capital=4

(general + Particular + reputational)

Emotional energy =2

**Person 2:** Beverly=13 total

Sense of Opportunities=6

Cultural Capital=5

Emotional energy =2

EXPLANATION: Sarah (person 1) and Beverly (person 2) enter into an interaction with some positive capital, but they have a disappointing interaction and they both leave with less capital. Sarah (person 1) then interacts with John (person 2) and leaves with extremely high capital and energy. John also leaves with about the same capital and energy as when he entered.

**Figure 5.4: Inserting Interaction Ritual Chains into the Theory of Differential Association from Edwin Sutherland** (YD is Young Democrats and S is a sorority)

Sarah, Final Totals: YD=28 S=14

Sense of Opportunities: YD=10 S=6

Cultural Capital YD=8 S=4

Emotional energy YD=10 S=4

Sarah Leaving Sorority:

Sense of Opportunities=6

Cultural Capital=4

Emotional energy =4

Sarah Leaving Young Democrats:

Sense of Opportunities=10

Cultural Capital=8

Emotional energy =9

Sarah Leaving Sorority:

Sense of Opportunities=4

Cultural Capital=4

Emotional energy =4

Sarah Leaving Young Democrats:

Sense of Opportunities=8

Cultural Capital=5

Emotional energy =8

Sarah at the beginning

Sense of Opportunities=2

Cultural Capital=4

Emotional energy =2

EXPLANATION: Start at the bottom and follow Sarah’s interactions upwards between the two groups.

NOTE: The network for the Young Democrats is not as dense as the Sorority, which is because Sororities are premised on very dense networks increasing their solidarity. However, this is not important to the principle being demonstrated in the diagram.

**Figure 5.5: Transmissions of Behaviors into Structure**

*Transmissions*

Loosely

coupled

*Repertoires of Action*

Habits Minor & mixed Networks,

repetition Friends,

Neighbors

Movements,

NGOs

Behavior Practices Conventions Routines Churches, temples

or mosques

Private

Corporations

Political parties

(tighter in Europe

than the US)

Roles Rituals State Agencies

Tightly

coupled

1. Prominent pollsters such as Nate Silver have made a reputation for predicting elections, but his method was much less successful in the 2016 election though he claimed a Clinton victory was in the area of overlapping significance levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mead’s theory of mind deals with impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation. The third stage of manipulation gives humans a much more active role in social action (Joas 2001; Mead 1934). Although manipulation is largely about the model I will present, I will not venture further on his theory of mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jonathan H. Turner also presents a synthetic model (1988:102-117), but the model presented here is quite different. He also focuses on the generalized other but puts more emphasis on Goffman and framing, presenting four types: physical, demographic, sociocultural and personal framing (108-113). These are useful in what I will use later for framing the generalized other; however, he does not point to negative and positive framing, which leads to the ‘we’ and the ‘they.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. I will use quotation marks around the “I” and “Me” because these could be confused with words in the text. This logic also applies to the lesser used “We” and “They.” I will not do so for the GO because the two letters capitalized do not present such a confusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The generalized other has been “somewhat neglected” (Holdsworth and Morgan 2007:401) by symbolic interactionists. Evidence of this is further developed in Janoski, Grey and Lepadatu (2006, and 2007) with the development from Blumer to Shibutani of multiple generalized others. Thomas Morrione drew Blumer out on multiple generalized others in an interview (Blumer 2004) where he somewhat reluctantly but eventually admitted that multiple generalized others existed. Shibutani referred instead to multiple reference groups. The Janoski, Grey and Lepadatu (2005, 2006) papers go into this in more detail (see also Yeung and Martin. 2003). However, the latest edition of the Sandstrom et al. (2014) textbook on symbolic interaction does mention multiple generalized others, but they do little to justify or develop the concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *The Good Place* is a TV series on Netflix. Through Chidi it brings a rather large amount of philosophical thinking into a setting with four people who think they are in the good place (i.e., heaven) while they are actually in the bad place (i.e., hell). Putting these people in a so-called ‘good place’ where they do not belong creates a theoretically greater torture than simply sending them to the bad place (Westfall 2019). Ironically, it gives them a chance to escape the bad place. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Other routes to structure are suggested by Sheldon Stryker and Tomatsu Shibutani. Stryker and Vyran (2006: 21) suggest that roles may “imply fixed social structural properties”. However, roles are not organizations with boundaries and “roles” do not act. Instead, groups like one’s generalized other act. Further, roles suggest many of the structural features of functionalist theory. Shibutani (1955) suggests that ‘reference groups’ might take the place of the generalized other and Robert Merton has written extensively on them. This position is very close to a generalized other, but I would like to make a distinction here. Reference groups could be of the anticipated kind (a group that you would like to join and you model your actions to perhaps get into it) and an actual reference group where you interact with others on a regular basis. However, Shibutani’s concept of reference group did not catch on with symbolic interactionists. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Communist parties as in China are a bit different since they infiltrate every place of work with co-managers in every firm, bureaucracy and enterprise. From a capitalist point of view, this dual management system is a tremendous waste of time and effort. However, it affords a tremendous amount of political surveillance and control. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This list might seem long and perhaps redundant, but I am following Sutherland’s exact wording as close as possible while changing it ‘criminology’ to ‘political sociology.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Randall Collins pushes his theory more in the direction of situational rituals with mutual focus and emotional entrainment (2002:47-99). His applications are more situational than group focused, much like Goffman and Simmel (e.g., sexual interaction, situational stratification and tobacco rituals) (2002:223-344). My goal here is connect these interactions with groups and that is why I use Sutherland’s theory. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. I use exchange theory since it is better suited to my purposes than Collins’ rather short discussion of power and status rituals (2002: 111-114; 348-349). Collins’ theory is based on people being “unequal in their resources”, which links to power resources theory but he is a bit vague about the connection. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Later on, Don Corleone does call in the favor to take care of a dead body using the man’s funeral parlor. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In the profession’s literature, a particular profession often engages in a “professional project” to raise the status of the group as a whole. Medical doctors rising above homeopaths with the Flexner Report are a good example, but the process also applies to nurses seeking bachelor’s degrees to promote the status of RNs (Larson 1977; Abbott 1988). These are examples of generalized exchange through acquaintances rather than family. Further examples can be seen in the development of trade unions. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. I do not claim to solve the micro-macro problem, but in these next two sections, I do indicate how this theory would approach the topic. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Practice theory has some excellent points; however, assuming that every interaction is largely unknown makes social interaction seem rather uninformed. Every interaction is not a mystery only revealed in practice. People do have selves with embedded values, beliefs, and histories. Daryl Bem’s (1972) self-perception theory does the same ontological ordering and I can accept this as happening at times, but it does not characterize all interaction. People do have motivations, intentions, and accumulated experiences. Further, power is weakly developed in practice theory (Watson 207; Ortner 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In the next few paragraphs, F stands for family, G for group, and SN for social network. Groups have more stringent boundaries than social networks. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. John C. Turner only published one article in an American journal. This may be why most sociologists of the symbolic interaction stripe, have not recognized his work. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. These numbers refer to individual tax evasion and include the self-employed. Tax morale refers to citizens willingness to pay taxes controlling for enforcement threats, and the following factors increase this morale: meritocracy, support for democracy, age, trust in government, being female, being religious and having greater education (Daude 2012; Luttmer and Singhal 2014). Each of these factors tend to involve generalized exchange rather than restricted exchange. Governments may increase morale by recognizing compliant taxpayers or the use of shaming (e.g., visits from the singing eunuchs in India). Business tax avoidance and evasion is another matter with the proliferation of offshore tax shelters. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ariel Reed’s “chains of power” is a useful theoretical concept. It does have prominent antecedents like “interaction ritual chains” or groups and situations, and “supply chains,” “value chains” and “commodity chains” that reach far into the world system. In the economic realm, these chains involve a certain amount of power leverage at each transfer point. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)