

**DOCILE BODIES, REFLECTIVE SELVES:
A FOUCAULDIAN-SOMATIC PERSPECTIVE ON
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

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Summary

The present paper investigates the role of the body in the work of Foucault and symbolic interactionism. Instead of a mere comparative analysis, the perspective Foucault takes of the social actor is employed at certain interactionists. Symbolic interactionists that incorporate an emphasis on the physical and somatic are investigated to make the Foucauldian perspective relevant to the investigation. Those deemed relevant are George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman and the identity theory of Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke. It is argued that a focus on the somatic and material aspects can avoid much of the arbitrary and fluid of social interaction. Relativism is suppressed and structure enhanced while still dealing with the importance of meaning.

Foucault presents the social actor as a mere body. Although alive, it leads a sort of group life without the imperatives of knowledge in modern society. It is only upon being invested by discourse that the body acquires an inner forum that disciplines it and makes it an individualised subjective of power. A reversion is created in Foucault's thought by claiming that the soul is the prison of the body. Discourse imposes conditions on what the individual can employ in thought and behaviour. As Foucault is not an interactionist, he underemphasises the motives of the individual. Upon researching his texts however, three main processes seem to surround the body. First, bodies are categorised, trained in procedures and placed in hierarchies. This is mainly where power is being exercised upon individuals. Secondly, there is implicitly an incentive factor responsible for both individuals being motivated by discipline, and the collective motive for discourses about optimisation of health and life in the human sciences. Thirdly, the capacity for the body to learn makes it both docile by incorporating knowledge, and later to constitute itself by means of using discourses to shape the self in a liberating way. The latter two processes are implicit, but necessary conditions for the subjectivation process to have an effect in the first place.

The social behaviourism of George H. Mead has a dormant somatic component in the account of the act. The impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation part of the act implies that behaviour precedes the emergence for the mind and self. This naturally sets material conditions of what kind of experiences the mind and self is constituted with. Gestures from the surroundings are imposed on the individual, and the response to it functions to keep the physiological organism alive. The neglected role of memory or experience also limits the flexibility of defining future situations due to interpretation being a process of calling up experience with acts and consequences. The "I" is further interpreted as the response of the

organism, and the “me” as constituted by memory of the responses and attitudes others have of him. Thus both aspects of the self have somatic sources. In much the same way as Foucault the body is filled with information with the intent of optimising life, but at the same time it directs the behaviour of the body, while simultaneously giving it a self.

Goffman’s dramaturgy is innovative by using materials in the surroundings when presenting a self that is favourable. By means of barriers to perceptions, the actor can control others’ view of him. It is an incentive to gain social support by being interpreted as competent, while avoiding being discredited. Incidentally, competency is always associated with the same optimisation motives that seem to sustain discursive production. Ritual behaviour is also motivated via competency incentives, while also illustrating the inertia of learning and simultaneous threat and privilege of reciprocity. One gives deference out of fear for not receiving it. Lastly, primary frames are an integral part of interpretation. Actors arrive at frames and do not create them from scratch. Primary frame also asserts itself if incentive processes are disturbed, such as a dangerous or painful situation. The image presenter is thus revealed as a psychobiological being seeking optimisation of life via skills.

Identity theory refines Mead’s inertia of learning by viewing role-meanings as identities stacked in a hierarchy of salience with a certain chance of being enacted. Burke and Stryker attempt to solve the puzzle of why the actor chooses one type of role behaviour over another. Commitment to relationships in culture and groups influences role behaviour and gives an identity higher salience in the hierarchy. Further, activated identities have a standard that controls meaning, and the actor counteracts disturbances to the goal of this standard. The behaviour connected to role identities serves to control resources, interpreted by signs and symbols. As such, incentive and interpretation are joined. People’s behaviour is dependent on both social and physiological utility and their physical location in social groups, thereby accounting for their specific experience.

Discussing the somatic in Foucault’s theory and interactionist theory grounds both fluidity of behaviour and linguistic imperatives in stable frames. The intersection between discourse, incentive and social action is articulated. Social individuals and their incorporation of discourse are embedded in tangible, incentive-based relationships in order to maintain competence. Such a conception suggests limits for relativism in how individuals are constituted by discourse. This also connects individuals to structures by suggesting links between learning and interaction. It is argued here that since structure and action are connected an overly free subject is useless to sociology. The somatic aspect suggests conditions for this freedom.

Thank you

While writing this paper I was an exchange student in Denmark, and subsequently decided to stay there. In many ways writing a theoretical masters thesis is already a solitary exercise. Studying away from my home university made it even more so. Therefore I would firstly thank my family and friends in general for their support and their tolerance of my absentminded manners during this period. A special thanks to those directly involved in my work on this paper. First a big thank you to Dag Album for being my mentor and having faith in my idea, undeveloped as it was at that stage. I also want to thank Peter J. Burke for showing me articles on identity theory done via qualitative research. A big thank you to Raed El-Badaoui for support and help with computer related matters. Sune Larsen also deserves my gratitude for helping me with computer scans. Whether you like it or not, you are all a little part of this paper. I could not have done it without the support of all. Thank you.

1.

Introduction

This paper aims to contribute theoretically in the structure/agency debate within sociology from a symbolic interactionist perspective. Associating symbolic interactionist theory with the Chicago school will be repudiated from the start here. Symbolic interactionism is here conceptualized as a specialized theoretical perspective in what is termed “sociological social psychology” along with other micro sociological theories (Burke, 2006; Rosenberg & Turner, 2004). In order to account for causes of social change, systems that operate independently of the intention of individual planning are inadequate. Societies are permeated by meaning and purpose, and both stability and change are affected by that, according to this author. That being said, the concerns described here also touch upon several other relevant issues in sociology. Since the thesis synthesises the poststructuralist thinking of Foucault, it also shares insight related to postructuralist inquiry, especially how it relates to signification and the non-discursive. Another more central question is also vital to this thesis. It deals with the arbitrariness of designating labels we assume are the cause of something, result of something, or another important emergent class of phenomena we judge are worthy of being named some category in theory. From an interactionist angle the most central exponent of symbolic interactionism, Herbert Blumer, has voiced his criticism against the reification of categories in sociology:

Students of human society will have to face the question of whether their preoccupation with categories of structure and organization can be squared with the interpretative process by which human beings, individually and collectively, act in human society. It is the discrepancy between the two which plagues such students in their efforts to attain scientific propositions of the sort achieved in the physical and biological sciences (Blumer, 1998: 89).

The poststructural position have on the other hand “deconstructed” classes of objects we take for given. Foucault has demonstrated how sexuality, crime, medicine and madness have been constructed historically with the consequence that social control has been intensified across populations. In that way, both poststructuralism and symbolic interactionism join in the social constructionism tendency that is modern in social science today. Social construction is here defined according to Ian Hacking’s conception that a phenomenon does not have to be inevitably constituted like it is, but is often assumed to be naturally unchangeable and given.

It is in reality a result of historical and social events. Often it is something that should be changed (Hacking, 1999: 6). Things that may be constructed are objects, ideas, and elevator words like truth (Hacking, 1999: 21-2). These constructs do become epistemologically real when we reify them and take these into account during social interaction. It does seem that anything can be constructed, including the concepts of sociologists struggling in the way described by Blumer above. But Hacking (1999: 31) contends that most physicists believe that material particles such as quarks are not subject to arbitrary social construction. The world presents itself externally upon our senses, giving us stimuli. Poststructuralists argue on the other hand that once grasped as a concept, that part of the world has entered the discursive realm, and is subject to social construction. Arguing for a world outside language is still to argue inside the domain of language (Smith, 1996: 176). We cannot escape this.

What makes physicists then reject the thesis that things can be arbitrarily socially constructed? The answer lies in the stability of the object. Child psychologists have argued that children until a certain age cannot keep aware that an object exists if it is not present. This is called object permanence. Hiding the object behind something would lead the child to act as if the object no longer existed (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem & Nolen- Hoeksema, 2000: 77-8). In that sense, children are the most radical constructionists. If we follow their example and remove the objects around us we will make important observations. The people we observe at a café might discuss a subject at one point, but later they are not. A man might come out as gay to his friends, receiving total acceptance. But when this process is over, no one who just arrived would in principle look differently at him. However, they would at any point notice that one of his friends is a black woman. If we crawled through her bedroom window later that night we would contently confirm that she is still a black woman, just as we expected. If we returned to the café it would still remain standing. But the topic discussed at the café and the man's declaration of homosexuality was gone. The race, sex and café exerted its continual stimuli upon my senses, but the sound waves were transient. Transient stimuli are more subject to arbitrary social construction than continual stimuli. That's why gender and ethnicity (the bodily aspects of it) play such central parts of social phenomena.

The bodily and material seems so much more stable than topics, declarations, or abstractions such as social system, definitions of the situation, interaction and so on. A theory that took into account the inertness of the physical and somatic in interaction would have considerable explanatory potential in terms of structure, even if it revolved around the relation between individuals and society. Can this be utilised in sociological theory? The belief presented here is that it already has been, but not systematically. It has to be actively

unearthed in order to see how consistently this aspect structures interaction. Apologies will therefore be given in advance for the inadequacy of this paper, due to the differing nature of the occupation with the somatic within the work of the writers discussed. It seems especially that several pragmatists such as James and Dewey theorised considerably on the physiological in their works. Therefore, a broader scope should have been used, but that would lead to a longer thesis.

Here the focus will be Foucault's conception on the body, and the implication this has for interactionist theory. Instead of a mere comparative analysis between Foucault and symbolic interactionism, the perspective developed when analysing Foucault is employed on several interactionists. As such this is a Foucauldian-somatic perspective on symbolic interactionism. It would not make sense to press otherwise unrelated interactionist theory into the mould of this perspective. Therefore those interactionists that have taken the material and somatic into their theories to the highest degree have been chosen for discussion. These are George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman and the identity theory of Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke. Mead has a classic focus on physiological psychology in his theory, but his works are mostly deemed social philosophy. Therefore Goffman and identity theory has been included to give some empirical justification for the theories, although the focus is discussion of their theories and not the extent of empirical support of these. Foucault did conduct empirical studies to support his theory. The formulation of research question then is: To what degree can Foucault's theory of the bodily and material make beneficial additions to symbolic interactionism's account of structure?

Do note that the focus on the body in these theories is not dealing with the phenomenological experience of embodiment as an interpretative process. Rather, the focus is to what degree the somatic and material stabilises and restricts social interaction. Just as we cannot fly because we do not have wings, neither can we interact in any way desired because of lacking physical contact with the right gestures and symbols, and barriers to our perceptions and behaviour. The theories discussed herein suggest conditions for these limits on interaction. Without further due, Foucault's perspective will be presented and discussed. Following that a presentation of Mead, Goffman, and Stryker and Burke's identity theory will be interpreted in a Foucauldian-somatic direction. Finally an attempt will be made at a consistent synthesis and a conclusion.

2.

Michel Foucault: The autonomy of the docile body

Foucault's social theory is starkly anti-humanistic, and as such might seem odd to compare with Symbolic interactionism. After all, that line of microsociology stress the competence of the individual and its ability to interpret situations and objects. Nevertheless, in Foucault's account of how the individual relates and reacts to its surroundings have both compatible and complementary similarities with interactionism. Compatible, because how the self is constituted and influenced by information are strikingly similar in both lines of thought. They complement each other via the implications they assume for how the individual reacts to this information, whether it is discourse or definitions of situations. The focal point of understanding the contingencies of the individual's reactions is the role of the body. The idea of the body is central in both Foucault and Mead, although they have different uses for it in their theories. For exactly this reason it is presumably possible to unearth the social psychological implications of Foucault's theories, much like Goffman believed about Durkheim (Goffman, 2005: 47). Foucault's idea of the body in society is intimately connected to his theories of discourse and power. As such it is necessary to illustrate how power and discourse affect individuals before analysing the role of the body in Foucault's authorship.

It is often believed that Foucault's main focus is power and modernity, because Rationalism and the emergence of the sciences receive most of the analytic attention. Foucault shows how the regimes of knowledge affect changes in social organisation and how the population sees itself and others. In order to do this he has conducted historical analyses of many empirical domains often assumed to be essential or stable phenomena, ranging from madness, medicine, crime and sexuality among others.

At the heart of Foucault's theory is the notion of discourse, linguistic articulations about the world around us. Discourses shape how we divide, range and connect concepts. In turn this gives guidelines about what to do with things in the social world (Foucault, 2006a: 120-1). Discursive knowledge is as such never objective. Knowledge is therefore intrinsically connected with power for Foucault. Associated with this is the idea that a certain type of discourses can enable or disqualify certain types of knowledge, leading to specific types of societies in different time periods. A grouping of such coherent discourses is called an episteme (Foucault, 2006a: 211-2). The historical analyses show how discourses become

different, leading to social change. The mad, sick and criminal is no longer treated in the same manner. Of course, this leads to differences in power relations. Foucault therefore differentiates between types of power as an outcome of discursive formations. And perhaps focusing on power is the most fruitful way of presenting the theory of Foucault, since his thoughts are not integrated into a totalising theory.

2.1. Sovereign power

Sovereign power is according to Foucault a pre-modern form of power wielded by a totalitarian leader, the king. In *Discipline and Punish* there is an account of how the king's power works (Foucault, 1991: 48-50). This power is subject to the king's whim and does not regard or classify the people it is used on. It is a repressive mechanism, and repression is also the only means of control. Therefore the king must demonstrate his omnipotent power with demonstrations of it. Violations of the law in this period are considered to be a direct opposition to the monarch, since it is only him that is the official wielder of the power. Torture is common in this period, with people watching the spectacle in order to observe the consequences of disobedience. These "power-scene" rituals are meant to demonstrate the king's power in a spectacular way, and they were meant to correlate in severity to the type of crime committed (Foucault, 1991: 9, 34). Thus, it is quantitative measuring of punishment. It is of interest to note how this spectacular, ritualistic and non-qualitative form of power lacks discursive considerations compared to later forms of power.

2.2. Disciplinary power

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the discourses underpinning power relations change. These changes lead to the modern forms of power Foucault tries to analyse. The reasons for the change are several. Often, the people watching the unfolding of public executions rioted against the sovereign's men, especially if it was seen as illegitimate (Foucault, 1991: 61). Also, executions became gradually regarded as inhumane. Reformers therefore wanted to change punishment towards leniency and humanity (Foucault, 1991: 75). The consequence of this is that there emerges a new economy of the power to punish. This power is both more evenly distributed and effective in its application (Foucault, 1991: 80). It also leads to the punishment for crime to be relieved of its blame (Foucault, 1991: 9). One only punishes because it is necessary in order to improve the criminal. Disciplinary power is

characterised by a continual application of surveillance, people are always being observed. As such they are therefore a constant source of knowledge. Foucault notes that there is a tremendous growth of discourse about the individual during this time period. Disciplinary power manifests itself in prisons, asylums, barracks, monasteries and schools. The focus is shifted from breaking the law to the nature of the individual. When people are aware of the individualising observation they are under, they start to modify their behaviour accordingly. This secures the continual effect of disciplinary power.

2.3. Bio-power

The other type of modern power focuses on the body of persons, and indirectly their health. Foucault uses sexuality and medicine as indicators of this power. The reason health is a major concern is because bio-power focuses on entire population's fertility, death rates, and other concerns related to the vitality of the body (Foucault, 1998: 139). As such there is a great interest to formulate and categorise the normal and deviant forms of sexuality and medical conditions. Foucault's point is that by charting these forms of human conditions, whether sexual or medical, scientists are actually creating new forms of selves.

In fact, Foucault argues that "sexuality" is not something that always has existed and been subject to repression in different forms. As with disciplinary power, bio-power is of a productive kind. Sexuality is therefore a discursive construction, consisting of anatomy, desire, behaviour, metaphysical assumptions and power (Foucault, 1998: 105-6). The distinctive about such constructions are that they pose as a clandestine essence that needs to be uncovered. Foucault claims that these practices of confession are from religious traditions, later taken over by psychology (Foucault, 1998: 67-8). By unearthing such essences one complies with the power relations in society and becomes a subject, entangled in a web of discourses. The individual on the other hand, takes this subject position to be his true nature. The insidious effect of bio-power is such that the individual actually works towards his own subjectivation. However, the specific consequences of having attaining a subject position are not static. For example, the rights and consequences of being a "homosexual" has changed from that subject position's creation in 1870 (Foucault, 1998: 43) to this day (Heede, 2004: 113). So a given subject position does not automatically entail control or repression. In fact, freedom and repression are not absolute principles, there is always a possibility of resistance, and never complete freedom. What is constant is the existence of power relations that are being maintained by discourses.

2.4. The effect of power

Perhaps the most original of Foucault's ideas connected to power and discourse is that the subject is a product of discourse, and not the originator of it. Discourse works through individuals, rather than them competently wielding discourse. Foucault rejects the idea of a phenomenological unity that expresses itself on its own free behalf (Foucault, 2006a: 30, 60). This position on the subject and its non-sovereignty is conceptualised in two ways.

First, the individual does not control meaning in the discourse he is using. The total sum of things that a discourse embodies works as a starting ground for people to communicate and influence each other. What is said, and its discursive possibilities for existing, is more important than the person saying it (Foucault, 2006a: 138). The meaning of a statement is hard to control, since discourse could always mean something else than is being expressed. There are many signified in a single signifier (Foucault, 2006a:134). In practical terms this means that when someone speaks, he is dependent on a language he has not made himself. It is the consequence of historical use and gradual change in what it refers to, the totality of things expressed. With each use, discourse changes somewhat, since the situation it is employed in is unique (Foucault, 2006a: 31). This gives Foucault the confidence to conclude that it is not the individual that controls discourse, but rather the opposite. The bits and pieces we use in communication are constructed by rules that are a result of culture and history. These have consequences for what we can express today. Power and discourse work through us. On the other hand, the unique situation that changes the meaning of discourse by reiteration implies a social and physical world that Foucault has a hard time explaining. It is only described and taken into account. This might well be one of the most important barriers to building a total theory for Foucault. He is merely content with describing discursive changes through his empirical studies.

The second part in the idea of the non-sovereign individual is that the concept of individuals is a recent historical invention. Power generated through discourse individualises people by labelling them with some discursively constructed essence. Before the end of the eighteenth century people lived a type of group existence where they did not become pinned to some individual identity. The concept of individual man had not been invented as it is employed in modern times (Foucault, 2006b: 336). At the advent of the human sciences, people had to encounter knowledge about themselves and laws that underpin life. This was all transmitted through discourse (Foucault, 2006b: 385). In this way appeared the modern idea

of man. Foucault consequently attributes this construction to the human sciences, and should this body of knowledge change or disappear "...then one could certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (Foucault, 2006b: 422). In other words, the concept of modern individual can be undone since it rests on discursive knowledge.

How is this individualization process realized? Mainly in two ways. First, the modern forms of power and the institutions that wield them split individuals up into different categories (Foucault, 1991: 191-2). This tremendous growth of discursive knowledge associated with modernity has to embody categories. And as Foucault's preferred area of study is the human sciences, it naturally follows that people and the characteristics associated with them become categorized into what is counted as knowledge, indicating progress and insight for those who construct it. For example, madness was not sharply distinguished from other forms of unreason in the classical period. But because of psychiatry and the power and truth effects it produced, madness became something specific, with the madman as an identifiable character (Foucault, 2006c: 248). As such, a sharp distinction between sanity and insanity is created, and those labelled as mad become subjected to power.

Secondly, the individual is constituted in a relation to himself. He creates himself as a subject to a discursive category such as criminality or sexuality. Of course, the categories are a result of discourses, such as knowledge of sexuality and all the labels of variations within that domain. These constructs are learnt by the individual during their lives. They are then essentialized by being treated as some clandestine nature that resides within each person (Foucault, 1991:198). It is taken to be that person's true nature, whether it's madness, sexual perversion or tendency to break the law. Foucault illustrates this well with homosexuality, where sodomy was a temporary practice that subsequently (via psychiatric discourse) became essentialized into a stable labelling of individuals. That temporary practice became a sort of stable interior androgyny. "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (Foucault, 1998: 43).

2.5. The docile body: a basis for Foucauldian interactionism

What has the discursive theory of Foucault got to do with the body? The "body", as the somatic component is defined in Foucault's theory, simultaneously plays both a crucial and residual role. The body is the end object of discourse and intimately connected to the subjectivation process. As stated previously, Foucault (2006a: 60) rejects a unitary self

governing subject. Instead he operates with the minimum required to explain individuals, hence the role of the body. People are bodies, and the direction and specifications of their actions are largely dependent on the power of discursive articulations. It does not seem to indicate an inert, static body, but a living body with needs and behaviour, in a sense much like animals that are unable to process symbolic language. Discourse gives guidance about what is rational or optimal to do or think. It might seem like a backward logic, but bodies attain an interior mental world only by being subjected to discourse. "...the soul is the prison of the body" (Foucault, 1991: 30). This means that the discourse that fills the body controls it from within. An innovative account of power is thus created. The discursively constructed psyche is naturally a product of many fragments of discourse, including humanistic morality and political decisions. It is created "...out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (Foucault, 1991: 29). Instead of a prohibitive theory of power we have a productive one that maximises the efficiency of the body while simultaneously maintaining its influence (Foucault, 1991: 162). In a micro-version the theory can be summarised like this: If I have a sweet tooth, and my mother have told me that the candy in the house is in the cupboard far up on the left, this piece of discourse will exert power over my bodily behaviour by making me fetch a chair and climb up to the cupboard, provided I want the candy. Information controls behaviour.

But does discursive power control people completely? Remember the extravagant punishments of the sovereign power, where the main incentive is an extremely painful and grisly death forced on all to witness. Here discourse is more modest, but pain, death and illustrating the consequences of crossing the king is maximised. In effect, the reward and punishment that maintains or threatens life also plays a role. As mentioned, the body in Foucault's theory is a living one. And in the illustration above, in order for me to care about my mother's discourse on candy, I have to possess a need for calories to have a sweet tooth. It seems that the body responds (actively, mind you) to information, by discourse and other sensory stimulations. This is also suggested in the works of Foucault. By assessing the role of the body, there are mainly three ways that discourse and the body interacts. These are categorisation, incentives and learning. Examining these mechanisms, and the implications and contradictions they pose, can greatly advance the relation between discourse and the material.

2.5.1. Categorisation

Discourse affects the body by categorising it in different parts and combining these differently in relation to each other. These constructs thus possess different statuses and procedures for action. For example, certain behaviours are categorised as constituting madness. If a body exhibits these movements, it will have an identity of madness imposed on it. Foucault says it best:

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history's destruction of the body (Foucault, 1984: 83).

This means that the body is affected by historical events driven by discourse. History, body and discourse are the things the genealogist should look for. But the relations between these elements and the conditions of procedures with regard to them have specific structures. And these change according to the changes in discourses.

First, there are operations in relations to categories. To become a soldier, certain competences must be achieved. Foucault shows in great detail how soldiers have to posture their bodies in certain direction with the rifle. This process is called exercise (Foucault, 1991: 155). But of course this also applies to schools, prisons and monasteries among others. Procedures are also used against people, for example the treatment that sexual perverts are assigned to undergo once they are identified as perverse (Foucault, 1998: 105).

Secondly, bodies or groups of such are categorised into an increasing number of classes. This can create binary distinctions between normal and abnormal, such as healthy and sick, or possessing an abnormal sexuality (Foucault, 1998: 105; 2005: 40-1). On a more subtle level, such categorisations give people identities based on these. Blood types, sexual orientations, IQ and psychological diagnosis distinguish people from one another, while also systematising these differences since the classification system affects everyone. This is the way that the modern individual is constituted discursively as Foucault (2006b: 336) claims. Without categories to distinguish, people are more like a herd and less like unique individuals. Inversely, the more aspects that are imposed on the body, the more unique he will be. In addition, this produces more types of people, as Foucault illustrates when he discusses why the prison has failed to remove criminality. Instead it is "...not intended to eliminate offences,

but rather to distinguish them, to use them” (Foucault, 1991: 272). This distinction based on continual visibility and categorisation puts individuals under control by making them subjects of discursive knowledge. Consider Herculine Barbin, a hermaphrodite in mid nineteenth century France living in a monastery surrounded by females only. This environment enabled Herculine to escape any distinctions based on gender, and so she/he lived in a “...happy limbo of a non-identity....” (Foucault, 1980a: xiii). After a doctor examination she/he was subjected to extensive medical examinations and later forced to legally be redefined as a man (Foucault, 1980a: xi). The lack of fitting social biography led to suicide for Alexina. The main point is that the belief that there was a “true” sex behind the body had extreme consequences for those that escaped such categorizations.

A third categorisation process is hierarchy. Categories are not equal in status. By seeing discursive formations as bringing us towards progress, categories can be arranged according to their success of reaching this terminal progressive state, without ever actually getting there (Foucault, 1991: 160-2). The benefit is the perpetual subjectivation of bodies, making them “docile” yet effective. Pupils are given grades, consumers ranged via spending power, health profiles judged according to normative demands. Being put in a hierarchy has a normative effect, by ranging individuals in relation to some normative or effectivity based goal. In general, one can get a feeling that the body is a passive recipient of these categorisations.

2.5.2. Incentive

Orderliness is created out of rewarding or punishing the body as well. This is a double edged sword in Foucault’s theory. On the one side, Foucault seems to take no normative stance in his discourse theory. Everything changes and is constructed through history, and bodies are disciplined (also by reward and punishment) into line by what is discursively rational to do. On the other hand, he is interested in how people can resist power and suppression, taking the side of those who are weak, which reveals a normative orientation (McNay, 2004: 142-4). More relevantly for this thesis, there are a lot of descriptions both how individual bodies are motivated to avoid negative sanctions and seek positive ones. Also, this operates on a macro level, where discourse seems to be concerned with an underlying motive to improve or maintain the population’s health and safety from danger.

In a micro sociological sense, Foucault simply assumes that individuals seek rewards or benefits and avoid costs and punishment. He is mostly implicit about this matter,

presumably because his approach is semiotic, not utilitarian. In describing discipline he appeals to this incentive process, as schools define behaviour as good or bad in regard to discourse imperatives. Privileges and punishments are perpetually accompanied by this evaluation, dividing values into good and evil (Foucault, 1991: 180). Also, knowing the aversive consequences of being caught breaking the rules motivate individuals to internalise discourse, monitoring their own behaviour. The Panopticon is the prime example of this process, as prisoners start to control and observe themselves because someone else might be observing them. But Foucault argues that it is a general mechanism for making people actively assist in their own subjection (Foucault, 1991: 202-7). On the other hand, discourse is not only used to directly subjugate. It is also internalised to guide rules for competence. For example, guides on health, hygiene, child rearing and a long life were influential for the bourgeois even though these were historically specific (Foucault, 1998: 125). These are specific procedures for living what was defined as a good and healthy life in that period. The common pattern is that all these dynamics serve the purpose of gaining competence and sustaining the physical health of the body. Of course, competence maximises the likelihood of staying healthy.

These same principles follow in a macro sociological sense, too, even though the relation to discourse is more evident here. Hidden in the background is an economic optimisation principle, especially with bio power. Value and utility are the principles that the health and effectiveness of the population are guided by. This is the reason for the hierarchies, measurements and appraisals that leave discursive traces future bodies internalise to ensure their own health (Foucault, 1998: 144). The compulsions generated by this principle are clearer if one reads all of Foucault's writings and find no trace of discourses that unambiguously are made to annihilate, hurt or destroy one's own population or body. This indicates that the human sciences that Foucault studied have all tried to protect and optimise health. They are employed to protect against violence and theft in regard to crime and madness, and to gain health concerning medicine and sex. Also science as a whole has this function in a generic sense. The body is alive, and wants to stay that way. This should alert us to the possible limits to what is commonly turned into acceptable discourse in society. Even people who kill themselves presumably do it for some benefit, imagined or real. An afterlife, the end of suffering and so on. This mechanism conceptualises the body as active and seeking incentives. As already noted, that part is indirect but substantial in Foucault's work.

2.5.3. Learning

It seems almost superfluous to establish, but the power effects of subjectivation must be internalized in order for disciplinary power and bio power to have effect. The behavioural outcome of the Panopticon, where the inmate knows that he might be observed and subsequently starts a form of self-surveillance, is quite prevalent in society (Foucault, 1991: 201). Inmates of the modern asylum for example, would be forced to see themselves in relation to the psychiatric discourse that labelled them so. The result is that "...he recognizes himself as objectively mad" (Foucault, 2006c: 251). Bodies are then infected with the perspective represented in that discourse. The individual body is thus subject to a certain articulation of discourse which describes relations of events with an optimal or normative implication. As discussed in the section on incentive processes there is always some optimizing principle. When the individual body acquires this knowledge he either takes it as a genuine competence procedure in itself, or follows it in order to not be pushed out into some marginalized category such as diseased or criminal. This internalizing of a body of discourse into the human being has two opposing effects, namely that of subjectivation and resistance.

First, learning creates subjects. By relating to the truth effects that discourses create, bodies bind themselves to the procedures that are offered. Knowing how to behave is here to follow some prescribed type of information. Discursive labels that are meant to reside inside individuals intensify the subjectivation process. These are the supposedly true natures of people that force them to cling to subjectivating identities (Foucault, 1982: 781; Foucault, 1991: 98-9). Sexuality is a prime example. It is a discursive construct that is supposedly clandestine but has causality for the individual's life (Foucault, 1998: 65-6). In this way we should confess about ourselves so that we can be classified. The notion that we need to tell the truth about ourselves compels us to consult that particular discourse about how to remain competent. If we learn the truth, we would know what to do. Of course, Foucault does not think that one way of classifying things is more in correspondence with some external truth than other discourses. The discursive installation called sexuality is not something that originally resides within us, but rather assembles disparate biological and behavioural aspects of the human body, and puts them in an imperatively bound frame of knowledge (Foucault, 1998: 105-6). This operates around the dichotomy of normal and pathological. The focus on the clandestine nature of people creates distinctive species of individuals such as the Malthusian couple, the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, and the perverse. Connected

to those deemed pathological, "...a corrective technology was sought for these anomalies" (Foucault, 1988: 105). But why is this? Because these individual types are appraised relative to optimal functioning of health related manners described in the section of the incentive process. It is important to learn this for the individual body, because it is assumed to optimize health and avoid being labelled an incompetent 'other'.

It is particularly through the creation of these 'others' that the incentive is learned and internalized, turning bodies into subjects. In medicine it is the dichotomy between the sick and healthy (Foucault, 2005: 40-1). The construction of the madman as a person type appears in *Madness and Civilisation* (Foucault, 2006c). Criminals are the archetype in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1991). The excessively unconstrained man is 'the other' in Greek antiquity (Foucault, 1992: 79-81). It is naturally important to learn these labels and what constitute them in order to not enter them. This is articulated and developed in learning one's position in the hierarchy of observation, something that has a normalizing function (Foucault, 1991: 181). Individuals seek to avoid being placed in the lower strata of the scale. This incentive mechanism is likely constant and non-discursive, but it deviates from classical rational choice theory in that the direction of incentive is decided by discourses. Foucault maintains that discourses only indicate truth-effects and not any truth outside of discourse (Foucault, 1980b: 131).

Learning also contains potential for resistance and liberation as well. There is a clear shift in Foucault's account of the autonomy of the individual from *Discipline and Punish*, where docile bodies are administrated, to *The use of Pleasure*, where people govern their lives via a technology of the self (McNay, 2004: 50). When tracing the dilemmas concerning sexuality back to Greek antiquity, Foucault notes how individuals employ discourses to constitute themselves.

I am referring to what might be called the 'arts of existence'. What I mean by the phrase are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being (Foucault, 1992: 10).

It appears that Foucault has included a sense of voluntarism into his work at this stage. In many ways it might seem like a compromise with the docile body described in his earlier work. But as with any social theory that aims to describe without presenting clearly defined hypotheses, ambiguity can serve as an asset. Interpretation is in many ways a choice given to the reader himself.

...it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle (Foucault, 1980c: 98).

If it is not clear exactly what is being said here. The general conclusion is that the individual is the effect of discourse. But that does not imply that discourse comes first, and individuals second. If individuals are, as Foucault claims, the vehicle and articulation element of discourse, the conclusion will be that discourse is dependent on individuals or bodies. Bodies are more correctly transformed into individuals by articulating discourse. Common knowledge entails that if every human body was annihilated, then the discourse embodied in books or other texts would become inert and useless. There would be no one to teach the next generation how to use a language. Discourse and individuals are then two sides of the same coin, but they are propelled by living bodies. Bodies do then have some power.

Culture in Greek antiquity included a moral dimension that was suggested rules of conduct to be followed. The individual "...establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice" (Foucault, 1992: 27). Although there is not only "...actions always in conformity with values and rules, but to a certain mode of being characteristic of the ethical subject" (Foucault, 1992: 28). The individual defines who he is in relation to the moral codes and decides on what kind of ethical subject he will be. It is "...self-formation as an "ethical subject"" (Foucault, 1992: 28). It involves learning the codes of conduct and then deciding how to act in relation to these. Why was this so important in that age? Because, as suggested with bio power and its focus on the health of populations, the moral codes in antiquity related to the health of the body. One's sexual austerity was connected to "...the whole game of life and death" (Foucault, 1992: 23). More concretely, the Greeks believed that semen (including women) issued from the entire body. It was necessary for giving life to new individuals, but at the same time it drained the ejaculating individual of a portion of his own vitality. Therefore excessive sex had harmful effects on health and could even end in death (Foucault, 1992: 131-3). Here one can observe the same incentive contained in a discourse that states the relations between occurrences as that suggested in the previous work of Foucault. The body must preserve its life, but the recipes for obtaining it seems to change historically. However, the Greek citizen should not necessarily be forced to be modest, but instead be a master of his own behaviour:

...the practice of regimen as an art of living was something more than a set of precautions designed to prevent illnesses or complete their cure. It was a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who had the proper, necessary, and sufficient concern for his body (Foucault, 1992: 108).

How then, does the individual competently decide what to do if he is a body dominated by discourse? Discourses and power do not have a one way relation. Discourse reinforces power, "...but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1998: 101). The discourse on homosexuality was meant to subjugate it as a perversion, but after its crystallisation as a category it began to claim legitimacy by utilizing the very same discourse. Discourses are ambiguous and can be used in different ways. "Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy" (Foucault, 1998: 101-2). Individuals that are not the originators of discourses can thus employ and draw upon them in different ways. Techniques of the self is to shape oneself by utilizing discourses learned in a competent way. Presumably it is to remain in control of the self as far as possible. Of course, this does not result in a voluntary social agent. As the individual is an effect of discourse and not its initiator, he is dependent on his location in certain places and times to learn discourses. After being filled with discourses that make him a subject, he can begin to draw on them in various ways. This corresponds to a technique of the self. This opens up an array of questions on the amount of different discourses learnt, and to what degree the perspectives are antagonistic or mutually disqualifying, can empower or weaken the subjects' ability to employ discourses in a voluntary fashion. Hypothetically, if all learned discourses are unitary and few, there would be a more narrow room for choice. If discourses are manifold and containing many perspectives, there would be more potential for choice.

2.6. The docile body as an actor

As the concept of the docile body will be used as part of an interactional analysis, let us sum up what the social actor from a Foucauldian perspective looks like:

- a) The living body is filled up with discourse, becoming an individual. Firstly, he does not control the relation between the discourse which is employed, and the objects they refer to. Therefore the body is partly determined by discourse, both in the identity he must assume and the rationality of his behaviour. The individualizing power of

discourse separates the body from others, naming it with a collage of categories that are bound to certain procedures. Each body becomes aware of this discursive visibility and observes himself in a similar fashion. Secondly, without this discursively based information, the individual would just remain a body among others in a state free from discursive power.

- b) Bodies are categorized by encountering rules of conduct that are prerequisites for attaining a certain identity. These procedures are governed by a certain optimizing principle. Categories are consequently affected by this principle as well. Therefore a number of dichotomy-based categories have different statuses, such as sick and healthy. Within categories there is also information based judgement. Bodies are put in hierarchies according to certain qualifications, creating a normalizing effect.
- c) Bodies are motivated to avoid punishment and receive rewards. This creates response to hierarchies by wanting to avoid being put far down on the ladder, and being defined as deviant. Bodies are thus prone to observing themselves in how they behave in relation to discourse, creating a form of controlling self-awareness. Discursive information is also taken as a resource in how to obtain health and competence. This incentive process propels discursive formation by a utility principle. Health and competence is the sought after result. Changes in discourse are the result of the interpretation of what the most effective or useful knowledge is.
- d) By learning the know-how and outcome of certain described events and positions, individuals are induced to follow the imperatives of discourses. They do this to the degree they take it for conduct procedures that will empower them and make them able to rise higher in the ever present hierarchies. Discourses are also learnt to avoid being labelled deviant and subjected to treatment or punishment. Conversely, individuals can employ different discourses to construct themselves. Even if they are dependent upon the discourses internalized, these discourses are inherently unstable. Therefore one can use them to construct oneself in a self-technology. In this way one exerts an amount of control over the imperatives contained in discursive articulations.

George Herbert Mead

3.1. How to solve problems in psychology

Mead is commonly referred to as the biggest contributor to the birth of symbolic interactionism (Turner, 1982). Originally a pragmatist, he taught social psychology courses at the University of Chicago (Baldwin, 2002: 10). It is this event that was picked up by sociology and later was developed into symbolic interactionism. It is the mind and self which best exemplifies Mead's break with earlier behavioural theories. Mead distanced his social behaviourism from the radical behaviourism of John B. Watson which only termed the actor as individualistic and in stimulus-response fashion (Mead, 1934: 2). What distinguishes Mead from the radical behaviourists is the idea of a reflective self that operates by taking the role of the other. On the other hand, Mead wanted to create a non-dualistic theory about the mind to remedy the problems associated with the rise of parallelism in psychology. Here the physiological organism with its nervous system can be studied as a scientific object. But the experiences of the individual cannot be accounted for in that manner (Mead, 1934: 31-3). They are subjective. And there seems to be no way of connecting these distinct ways of conceptualising the individual. The theory of Mead shows how experiences are unique but not private by the way they refer to common objects. It is not these objects that are responsible for the development of self and mind, but the social process between the organism and these objects. It is a theory of self development by interacting with others in societies, something that made Mead's social psychology especially relevant for sociology.

3.2. Emergence of mind and self from the gesture

The mind arises out of the social experience according to Mead. Therefore socialisation and acquiring a mind and self are two sides of the same process. His starting point is a Darwinian phylogenetic basis that incorporates social process within the capabilities of that physiological organism (Meltzer, Petras & Reynold, 1977: 28). All organisms react adaptively to their environment. In this sense the gesture is crucial. A gesture is part of a social act that functions as a stimulus for the organism. Mead uses an example of two hostile dogs, where movements in one dog becomes gestural stimuli that the other dog reacts to in order to avoid getting hurt

(Mead, 1934: 42-3). A loud bark or bared teeth are gestures that we know indicate hostility. This makes us react to it. Gestures function as predictors of what is to follow later. That is also defined as the meaning of the gesture. A gesture is meaningful if it indicates later occurrences that we react to. It is important to note that meaning is not an inner mental state, but a relation between parts of a social act (Mead, 1934: 76). This corresponds nicely with Foucauldian notions of the individual as just a body.

3.3. Significant gestures are symbols

Some gestures have a more crucially social effect than others. The vocal gesture is special in that it communicates the same meaning to both sender and receiver. When we speak, both we and others experience the same words (Mead, 1934:62). Such types of gestures are called significant gestures (Mead, 2002:189; 1934: 67). This is not the case in other bodily behaviour such as facial movements. Although some vocal gestures, such as a lion roaring, does not produce similar meanings for sender and receiver, human language has been standardised to create the same meaning in both. As such, meaning becomes possible to transmit socially in a more complex way than the ordinary gesture. Knowledge can be passed through generations by the help of language. As language is symbolic Mead defines these special types of gestures as significant symbols (Mead, 1934: 47). They have the same meanings for all who hear them. If meaning is equalized between individuals, they can understand each other. Furthermore, since interaction involves responses between people, the immediate information we receive from them is about us. But responses need not be the same. Organisms are different both in terms of physiological constitution and past experience (Mead, 1934: 201), and as such they occupied their unique place in terms of when and what they experienced in terms of gestures. Therefore one should not jump to the conclusion that individuals understand each other perfectly because of the significant gesture. Nevertheless, in the case of language meaning is more or less standardised since it depends on this to convey meaning from one person to another. There is still not a need for any psychic entities to explain behaviour. Language is learned in the same manner as other stimuli. It is the ability to keep information that equips us with the ability to employ symbolic language.

The significant symbol facilitates the development of mind more than any other gesture type. The words we learn in language have a reference in context, and these are recalled when we say the word. This has the same social distribution effect as any significant gesture; it is a socially shared meaning. Because we have learned them we can summon these

symbols in our memory. We can converse with ourselves with these internalised significant symbols. This is what thinking constitutes according to Mead. “The internalization in our experience of the external conversations of gestures which we carry on with other individuals in the social process is the essence of thinking” (Mead, 1934: 47). This is the specific point that mind emerges, not as an already existing entity, but a process. “At this lowest form of what we may call the emergence of consciousness we assume that the organism reacts to conditions in its own life process” (Mead, 2002: 92). It is a process of a biological organism responding to its environment (Mead, 1934: 132). In other words, the outer external world is incorporated through learning, and these socially learned gestures are the building blocks we employ when we think. Thoughts are both subjective, because we are singular organisms, and socially shared through the use of significant gestures.

The highest form thinking according to Mead is reflective intelligence. Here we use the symbols we internalised to check the possible solutions to challenges facing us in the world. We are aware of a number of actions and possible outcomes, and appraise their chance of success based on previous experience. Mead uses the example of a man who wants to cross a chasm and illustrates how the man’s symbolic capacity is superior to the dog’s trial and error actions (Mead, 1934: 122-3). Reflection is essentially a problem solving capacity, based on previous experience (Mead, 1934: 85-6). Of course, the key word is experience. One must have some idea of what to check the consequences of in order to run action and consequence-scenarios in the mind. If a person does not know anything about a certain topic, he will have bigger problems both to think about what to do and choosing a type of action towards the specific problem.

If we go back to the challenges accompanying radical behaviourism and parallelism psychology mentioned above, Mead solves them both in this elegant theory. First an interior forum is created through learning and responding to the exterior world, a physical and social world of pleasure and pain. A reflective mind of inner conversation is created because of responses to the environment, something that behaviourism ignored. Secondly, the parallelism is solved by physical stimuli becoming learned through experience. A physical organism incorporates stimuli that are socially shared by significant gestures. The body and the “psyche” are joined via learning. And the benefit of dispelling the problems of behaviourism and parallelism is a totally social theory of the mind. Socialisation and interaction processes are illuminated also.

3.4. Significant gestures are not equivalent with discourse

Children learn the language in the process of acquiring the symbols and experiences associated with gestures, significant and not significant. This naturally includes language. At this point it should be pointed out how Mead's analysis diverges with poststructural accounts of language and discourse. Discourse does not produce truth effects independently of an external world, where discourses can only be evaluated relatively to other discourses. The child learns words and what they refer to by indicating these objects in a perceptual world. When the child points at the flying creature and says "bird", he is taking a physical stimulus and associates it with other stimuli, such as words and writing (Smith, 1996: 188). Without our culture and families we lose the ability to employ discourse. This is dependent on social processes of teaching and learning, reliant on the effects of significant symbols. There is nothing arbitrary in the relation between the physical and discourse, especially since suffering and gratification are intrinsically a part of learning to name objects. Parents frequently feel it is important to teach children to avoid fire and knives, for example. In the chapter on identity theory the idea of incentives and indication will be further developed through the concept of resources.. As individuals respond to the gesture, the significant gesture is no less physical. It also indicates concrete things in the environment of the organism. Of course, there is no way of reaching complete and utter knowledge of the world as we are only equipped with sensory organs. The point is rather, indications made by significant gestures grow out from the physiological organism's response to stimuli in the environment. Signification is therefore intrinsically bound up with the somatic and material, and distributed socially by gestures that have equal meaning to different individuals.

3.5. Role-taking is the door to play, game, and the generalized other

Taking the role of the other becomes possible when learning language. By stating a phrase, the individual also arouses the same response in him as the recipient of the phrase (Mead, 1934:73). This allows people to gain information of what the role of the other person is so that they can predict the responses of other to a certain degree. As such individuals continually take into consideration other's behaviour when they act too (Mead, 1934: 69). Implicitly they learn other peoples patterned activity, by observing and arousing responses in themselves. Small children actively imitate and practice the behaviour of those around them. This is termed play. A child can play at being a policeman, father, mother, indian, or other roles

(Mead, 1934, 150-1). These different roles are organised meaningfully so that mother and father can be incorporated into the idea of family. Play is when the child learns to act according to one role among several other roles. When she put different counter roles together, and takes the rules for each of them together simultaneously, she is playing a game. It is therefore a development when children advance from playing mother to playing family. They are coordinating activities in the latter. To play a game effectively, each individual should know all the rules for each different player (with their different roles). The child must "...be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other" (Mead, 1934: 151). Of course the game metaphor can be used on many types of social groups and organisations where people have differentiated roles to play, including banks, parliament, stores and so on.

All the different roles and responses of members participating in the game generate a common concept of the group, based on the experience of interacting with the community the individual has grown up with. This "common social activity" and the group that performs it generates the concept of "the generalised other" (Mead, 1934: 154). It is the organised responses of the entire community that surrounds the person. He also responds to generalised other, so that this idea of the community influences and constrains his behaviour (1934: 155). The generalised other becomes an axiomatic thing that the individual can respond to in its own right (Mead, 1922: 161). This abstract concept merges the attitudes of the individuals in the group. In many ways this can be thought of as a cognitively reified entity we refer to when we interact with others in our society. Even though every individual consist of a unique mix of behaviour that we observe, we lump together our experience with them. The generalised other is a conglomerate of our kinsmen. Immigrants are an example of the absence of a suitable generalised other. Their development and learning transpired somewhere else. Consequently, they not only speak another language (significant symbols), but their repertoire of responses (and corresponding gestures) with their surroundings are different. As such, they often don't share the same procedures for problem solving and values of the receiving society. This leads to differences and challenges in adapting, but not only negative. This can also bring fresh perspectives into a society.

Social influence becomes more pronounced when a sense of self develops. By using significant symbols and taking the attitude of others towards oneself, the individual gains an image of what kind of person he is (Mead, 1934:226). As this is based on the feedback from several others, the image is a socially objective one. Based on this image the individual can become an object of himself (Mead, 1934: 138). At this point one has a sense of self. By

going through the interactive stages of play, game and the generalised other, the construction of a self is realised. Since it is formed via interaction with others, the self is structured in much the same fashion as society. Even though people are different, there is a common core of categories that hold us socially together as a community (Mead, 1934: 163). Interestingly, Mead also views the self as divided into multiple parts, depending on who we have been in contact with. “We divide ourselves up into all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances” (Mead, 1934: 142). This side of Mead strongly mirrors Burke and Stryker’s identity theory as we will see later. It is crucial to mind the difference between dividing into different selves dependent on who one encounter and who one is acquainted with. The multiple self concept is based on learning by means of the same process of internalising significant symbols. Therefore there are selves only corresponding to things we know, since gaining a self is dependent on taking others attitude towards oneself. Role taking with totally unknown people should for that reason be more difficult. Therefore this process is not a completely fluid one. It has conditions that must be met in order to run smoothly.

In addition to this Mead separates the self into the “I” and the “me”. The “I” is the initiator side of the self that reacts to the stimuli in the world. It is the source of creative and unexpected actions that cannot be predicted in advance (Mead, 1934: 177-8). The “me” is the regulating part of the self which guides the initiation of behaviour (Mead, 1934: 209). It comes from experience with the community and the attitudes they have taken towards the individual. So, when the individual starts an action it is the “I” that initiates it. To guide the impulse the “me” comes into play based on what we have learned about previous similar situations.

3.6. The somatic in Mead’s social behaviourism: Memory and life-process

The attentive reader might have observed that scattered throughout the presentation of Mead’s theory are rather tedious reminders that a concept of “psyche” is not necessary on its own. One of the most important points about the social behaviourism of Mead is that mind and self are constructs based on the organisms experience and interaction with others. This places conditions and limits on the structure and elements of mind and self. It accounts for why people from different societies are different, not only with respect to language, but also what their values are, what they think is appropriate, and what performances they believe is possible. Herbert Blumer (1968: 143-4) points out that the notion of “social system” in macro sociology is a reification, and in reality consists of social actors interpreting the meanings in their social world and acting on that. In this way the structure of society can be changed. What

many symbolic interactionist theories like Blumer's leave only implicit is that mind is also a reification in the same way. The development of mind is based on a physiological process. It is the organism's reaction to gestures that are significant. By learning the meaning of gestures, one can converse with oneself using these significant symbolic gestures. But the construction of mind via biological response to gestures places very specific constraints on the flexibility of mind. The development of mind is a reward seeking process that assists in adaptation to the environment.

What constrains the constitution of mind? In Mead's social behaviourism there is an underlying process that all the adaptive behaviour to gestures rest upon: Memory. In order to understand the meaning of gestures (i.e. predicting what happens next) one must have learnt and remember what behaviour follows the gesture. The same goes for significant symbols. They must be kept in memory to connect sensory input and symbols. Without this mechanism knowledge can neither be utilised nor retained. Mead refers to this as experience and memory without any clear separation. But he is clear that learning gestures, symbols, and further building a self is based on experience. This message is implicit but consistent throughout Mead's works (Mead, 1934: 111-2; 1938: 161, 163; 2002: 39, 48, 53, 104, 107). It is essentially this:

...we fill it out with memories and imagination. In the whole undertaking these serve in place of perceptual stimulations to call out the appropriate responses. If one is going to meet an appointment, he indicates to himself the streets he must traverse by means of their memory images or the auditory images of their names (Mead, 2002: 106-7).

In other words, memory is the bedrock for making indications (i.e. delayed responses) by means of the "I" and the "me" when interpreting and choosing what action to take next. It supplies the basic building elements for constructing both a mind and a self, since both responding to oneself and seeing oneself as an object is dependent on keeping those experiences in memory.

The relation of memory and the body lies for Mead in the act, a part of his theory that is often neglected. "The relation of mind and body is that lying between the organization of the self in its behaviour as a member of a rational community and the bodily organism as a physical thing" (Mead, 1938: 445). The act of any organism consists of four phases: Impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation. The different phases are separated for aiding analytically as a heuristic device, but in its perceptive reality it functions as a whole (Mead, 1938: 452). The *impulse* is the prerequisite for any type of adaptive response. A classic

example is hunger (Mead, 1938: 3-6). This sensitises the organism to act. We will look for some source of nutrients. This stimulus is essential for acting. For example, planning to store food for the future is based on knowing and having experienced the displeasure of hunger. You must know what you plan to avoid. The second phase, perception, involves discriminating and actively paying attention to stimuli. This consists of incoming stimuli and the images that are aroused as a consequence. It is not a passive process of receiving stimuli, but also consists of attention, imagery and an attitude to act (Mead, 1938: 3). Images that are evoked originate from experience and memory, but they are employed to predict future outcomes (Mead, 1934: 344). This particular way of handling the memory of previous occurrences is to maintain the physiological state that keeps the organism alive. “Primarily living forms react to external stimulation in such fashion as to preserve the living process” (Mead, 2002: 94). The third part of the act is *manipulation*. Physical handling directly gives us experience of what objects may be used for (Mead, 1938:25). A small child may tear things down from the table time and again. This is manipulation of the external world to find out means to achieve ends. Gradually we gain experience and thus competence of manipulation, because actions that preserve health and life are preferred. In the manipulatory phase contact experience will occur (Mead, 1938: 12-3). Even though we see the object from a distance, the object is a part of the whole environment that causes a response from the organism. In addition, photons that emanate through light actually do make contact with the eyes of the individual. The final phase and the goal of the act is *consummation*. The goal of the act is achieved and the impulse is satisfied, thus removing the motive to act (Mead, 1938: 136) Food is eaten, money are made, compliments are received. There is payoff for our efforts. Satisfaction of the impulse phase supplies the organism with attaching value to the act (Mead, 1938: 25, 452). Things can be either rewarding or aversive, and this shapes our further conduct. When the organism has acquired some experience all phases of the act feed into each other (Mead, 1938: 3). Starting with the impulse, the images of manipulating objects, and the following ends these means are used to, emerge in the individual. Thus, he is able to control his conduct while seeking to reach the consummation phase of the act. The act for Mead is not a case of simple stimulus and response. The social person can indicate means and ends to himself and this empowers him to shape his own behaviour. But the indications are constituted by memories of past experience with ones responses to similar stimuli.

How is the act related to the “I” and the “me”? As illustrated above, both the “I” and the “me” are an intrinsic part of our behaviour. The “I” is the initiating part of the self, while the “me” is the side that shapes that initiative and gives it direction. The “me” is based on

experience and is thus involved in the images of past acts when the organism is stimulated to feel the impulse and further phases of the act. Memories of the past feed into both a “know how” of how to perform further conduct and furnish a sense of who we are by responding to how others respond to our actions. If we return to the example used in illustrating Foucault’s discourse concept, we can say that when you feel hunger images of your mother telling you where the cookie jar is located emerge in you mind. Based on that information you know (also based on memories) how to access the right cupboard and get the cookies. That situation in itself is a new experience that you may respond to. For example, if you decided to eat cookies despite your mother discouraged it, you might come to think of yourself as a person with a strong sugar craving. This further shapes the self. The “me” is thus based on memory, a physiological ability of the central nervous system to connect one response with another (Mead, 2002: 124-5). If we look at recent accumulations in neurological discoveries, there is overwhelmingly support for the view that learning and memory is based on a physical alteration of nerve cells in the central nervous system (Giese, Peters & Vernon, 2001; Martin & Morris, 2002). Occurrences in an organism’s environment may affect its neuron cells. The electrical impulses that nerve cells emit between each other may change in terms of potentiation, i.e. how little stimuli are needed to activate nerve impulses (Martin & Morris, 2002). This alters the functioning of neurons, and consequently the organism’s behaviour. But function and structure are interrelated. In order for this to occur, the mechanisms that allow for an electric impulse must change also. Giese et al., (2001) investigated how the basis for potentiation changes by structural alterations in the channels that let the molecules responsible for differences in electrical charges pass in and out of neurons. Therefore the structure in the K⁺ channels in the walls on the nerve cells changes. Genetically modified mice with difference in the ability to pass K⁺ molecules through the neuron wall exhibited consistent variance with the ability to learn adaptive behaviour in a learning experiment. This indicates that learning and memory rest upon physiological mechanisms.

The “I” in Mead is a source of more uncertainty. It is a source of unpredictability and initiative (Mead, 1934: 177). As such it is our response that stimuli in the social world call out in us. Impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation stage alike are characterised by the organism acting on basis of occurrences in its environment. But is the “I” utterly unpredictable? Are there any limits to the uncertainty of this side of the self? Of course, change in social groups occurs, and this change is presumably brought about by individuals. So innovation is a fact. But this does not imply that the “I” is totally erratic. As noted earlier, the organism’s response to the environment, its act in response to stimuli, has the ultimate

function of maintaining the homeostatic processes that uphold the organism's life (Mead, 2002: 94). That is a reaction common in all life forms. This corresponds to the incentive mechanism identified in the chapter on Foucault. All of the human sciences and their discursive output have as a motive to either maintain health and life, or to accumulate competence to deal with challenges against these essential processes. Social competence behaviour is not separable from physiological response, since evolution is dependent on organisms cooperating with one another in a population (Mead, 1934: 227-8). It could be argued that since life changed from one sex that just reproduced by simple cell splitting, into two sexes that needed to copulate to produce offspring, the physiological and the social have been inseparable. What one should remember is that the "I" is not a metaphysical indeterminacy factor that just brings novelty into a theory that otherwise would be rather deterministic. It originates from a physically real, biological organism. David Lewis (1979) has scrutinised the concept of the "I" because of ambiguity in many of the written works of Mead. He contends that the "I" have been misinterpreted, thereby stunting much of the potential in Mead's theory. Looking at Mead's works, Lewis finds two types of statements describing the "I". Either it is described as simply the response of the organism, or the "I" is something that responds to things. The results are unambiguous. It is overwhelmingly the first type that is mostly present and also fits into the social behaviourist position. "A reader who is disposed to see inconsistencies surely will see them by the score, but when the reader can see consistency, it is more likely that the interpretation is within the author's perspective" (Lewis, 1979: 265). The "I" is thus the organism's response to stimuli in its surroundings. These are uncontrolled, but evolution has presumably for the most part favoured those that serve to maintain life. Mead himself argued that what distinguished living from inanimate objects was selection to preserve continued functioning, and nothing more. "The operation of light upon an animal or plant is a photo-chemical process as mechanical as upon a Kodak film" (Mead, 2002: 94). Therefore, the response of the "I" can with a high probability be said to have a direction. Nevertheless, organisms and their functioning are always constituted differently, leading to different responses. When a person responds it is always in a unique situation, and the outcome is always somewhat uncertain (Mead, 1934: 175). However, this uncertainty does not originate from a psyche or mind. It is the novel in the physical and social situation, including our bodies moving. Novelty is introduced when things in the world are reorganised. "...the reorganization brings in something that was not there before" (Mead, 1934: 198). Mead refers to this phenomenon as emergence, and it causes the world to continually change. When water is created it is simply a combination of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen

atom. But this unique combination results in water, something that was not present before this constellation (Mead, 1934: 198). Combinations of elements constitute higher systems of functioning, such as mind emerging out of the social process. But does this dispel the feeling of determinism in this account? Even if novelty is introduced into the situation, is not the individual conceived of here somewhat robotic with the interplay between memory and survival impulse? It does not have to be so. Even if memory and the life process are the underpinnings of the self, the main difference from traditional symbolic interactionism is that the individual is given a direction and conditions for behaviour. Indications run just as smoothly. Even perception itself can be subsumed under this interpretation of Mead. Consider Mead's discussion on optical illusions, such as the appearance of a stick being bent when it is stuck in water (Mead, 1938: 128-9). It looks as if it is bent, but we already have an organization of attitudes formed through passage of time, i.e. memory. There is hence a readiness to respond to the perceptual object in a certain way. We know because of experience, seeing the stick as straight before it was immersed in water, that it is the water that causes it to appear bent. In such a way it is "...to an object of reflection that we respond rather than to that of direct perception" (Mead, 1938: 129).

3.7. Lack of information as influencing behaviour

The capacity of the individual to remember its experience has structural implications for the act. Things experienced in the perceptions of objects become part of the self. As the perceptual stage of the act is in conduct, the objects sensed become cut off from their immediate context due to the individual's ability to hold them in its consciousness. That is to remember things that happened, whether 20 years or a moment ago. These experiences become part of the manipulatory phase of the act when they are employed in ordinary conduct (Mead, 1938: 106). As such, a person takes his stored experience into account when he encounters things in his everyday life. Events are checked against previous events to see how they are related both in terms of consistence and benefit for the person. If things are consistent and predictable they are beneficial in that a stable environment (with its predictable resources) increases life chances. Events are also evaluated as to their direct benefit. This is originally connected to somatic pleasure, but via the relay of experience memory the scope of this mechanism is greatly increased. The immediate reward of money, for example, rests upon the individual's previous knowledge of the contracts of money's value in a society. If this has not been learned, the person will not know that value, and will behave in an accordingly ignorant

fashion. Mead states that this experience contained in the self controls the persons acts. The experienced hardness of wood prevents the individual from ramming his head in a tree (Mead, 1938: 107). Focusing of the adaptive function of memory and the benefit- cost mechanism on memory also moves us closer to Mead's behaviouristic side he shared with the radical behaviourist Watson. After all, George Herbert Meads approach was originally regarded as "social behaviourism" (Mead, 1934).

Because of the dependency of memory, not knowing something has just as important consequences. The role of memory as the ground which experience rests upon can be used to conclude that only the experience that has become part of the self will shape thinking and behaviour. This has enormous and neglected structural consequences. In simple terms, what the individual has not learned, he does not know. As a consequence, he does not react in regard to it, since he does not know about it. Such a simple absence of knowledge holds the person ignorant in those areas until he has learned it. Of course, ongoing events and previous experience can be combined and its conclusions can lead to new behaviour, but there is still the fact of lacking information. In addition, there can be superficial or partial knowledge of areas, creating grey areas of knowledge's role in shaping behaviour. Today's media often makes this an everyday situation. However, intimate and immediate knowledge is more bound up with the act and our responses to gestures. It should in principle be more valued than the abstracted and superficial kind. But many types of information cannot be checked by experience. As an obvious example, consider religion. As scientific facts have progressed, religious beliefs have declined where they contradict each other. This is because the scientific method places stricter verification requirements on facts than the dogmatic approach of religion. The information gained from science is more reliable. But extreme religious beliefs still stand strong many places. Places with fundamentalistic religious beliefs are nevertheless dependent on some level of information control. Education in these places lays a strong focus on dogmatic metaphysical assumptions, and not on updated science. It must be rejected within the group and afterlife dogma must be elevated. Such religious groups often shun media and association with outsiders. People must believe in reward in the afterlife, and intimate knowledge of alternative information might favour such sources instead of religious dogma. Another special feature is that one cannot go back and change one's mind, since dead individuals don't start living again. The consequence of death cannot be explored and then be empirically employed. This fact will keep religious dogma as an important motivator in obedience for a long time, but alternative information might disqualify it for a particular individual. It all rests upon the experience of the self.

3.8. A Foucauldian-somatic view on Mead

In summing up Mead's social behaviourism with a focus on his account of the somatic, there are so many similarities with Foucault's account of the body. Supplying the Foucauldian perspective seems almost superfluous. Mead starts out with a simple physical organism that is only distinguishable from dead matter by virtue of its ability to discriminate between stimuli (Mead, 2002: 94). This discrimination primarily serves to maintain the organism's life processes. Foucault seems to indirectly take for granted a similar incentive process that bodies respond to in order for discipline to have an effect. Such incentive reactions are what all organisms have in common. These sorts of behaviours are dependent on physiological specialisation. Such specialisation is responsible for many organised behaviour patterns or societies in the animal kingdom, although the social interaction is an integral part of this adaptation (Mead, 1934: 227-31). Animals are of course born into and thus adapted to certain environments.

This paper argues that it is through the ability to retain memory that the physiological organism acquires personhood. The role of memory has been underemphasised in many interpretations of Mead, with the result that his theory's ability to explain stability and continuity has not been realised (Turner, 1982: 213). The gesture signals oncoming events and allows for the individual to adjust to the event before it happens. However, if one cannot remember previous experiences with similar gestures no such adaptation is possible. This is in all probability the evolutionary basis of favouring organisms with greater ability to retain memory. Those who remembered gestures (for example threatening behaviour) the meaning of gestures could react before it was too late. Changes in the central nervous systems that cause two types of occurrences to be associated with each other is the basis of learning (Giese et al., 2001). In Mead's case it is typically to associate a gesture and the following event. The infant organism, either human or otherwise, is thus physically present in all its learning processes, and the incentive of reward and punishment is essential to this process. In Foucault's analysis however, the internalisation of discourse and surveillance implies a reverse causality. Discourse causes bodies to become docile. Because Foucault is a poststructuralist, he does not take the perspective of the individual, and this is why he wants to focus on how discourse is the cause of individuals (Foucault, 1980c: 98).

The social behaviourism of Mead is not, however, opposed to Foucault's position on discourse and subject. Mead does explain the perspective of individual, but he does not

assume a subjective phenomenological starting point. Instead, private perspectives are explained in terms of observable behaviour (Mead, 1934: 5; 1938: xvi). Therefore individuals can be conceived of as bodies filled up with information and controlled by it in the same way as the docile bodies that Foucault speaks of. In Mead however, there is a reciprocal relation between the organism and its environment (Mead, 1934: 10). The driving force in the organism is the incentive process, the maintenance of life. On this account Mead corrects Foucault by illustrating explicitly how incentives, learning and symbols are interconnected in constituting an individual. As already mentioned, Foucault's empirical studies also confirm that discursive generation works in favour of maintaining life and competence. Subjectivation is nevertheless not prevented. And in Mead's case it is accomplished by the significant gesture, a gesture that has the same meaning for both the sender and others. Language is the most important. Observe though, that language and other significant gestures also are mere physical stimuli. The sound waves that carry language have the special features that they hit all organisms' sensory systems within hearing range. If they were loud enough they would cause pain, motivating organisms to flee via the incentive process. Language is therefore neither mental nor subjective. Significant symbols only indicate things, and they do it because in the learning situation they mean approximately the same thing to both speaker and hearer. But they could mean different things, depending on the specific context of acquiring the significant symbol. Dialects vary within the same language, for example. The significant symbol thereby allows for symbolic and discursive information to be incorporated into the body of the individual, by facilitating the learning process. In physiological terms this means conditioning the nervous system to connect two arbitrary pieces of information, word and object. In other words, there is created a possibility for signification.

3.9. Why no Herbert Blumer?

It is commonly said that Herbert Blumer is the main representative of symbolic interactionism. Why is he not included here when the term symbolic interactionism is in the title of this very paper? Firstly, one of the things that will not be investigated here is whether Herbert Blumer interpreted the work of George Herbert Mead as he intended. There has been a lot of debate on this (Blumer, 1980; Kohout, 1986; Maines, 1988; McPhail & Rexroat, 1979; Stryker, 2002a). However, others that draw on the work of Mead can be charged with the very same accusations. His work has been described as many things other than social behaviourism and symbolic interactionism, as well as speculations on whether Charles

Morris' stenography of Mead's work represents only Mead, or if it is a further interpretation on the behalf of Morris (Gillespie, 2005). This only illustrates the folly of attributing an intention to an author when you only can access posthumously written manuscripts and lectures recorded.

The main reason for not including Blumer is his absence of focus on the role of the material or somatic in interaction. His focus is on the meaning of social interpretation and fitting together lines of action. People act on the basis of what things mean to them. Of course, this is all true but specific processes might put some limits to what is possible to interpret freely. "In standing over against the object in both a logical and psychological sense, one is freed from coercive response to it" (Blumer, 1998: 69). Really? Will not an explosion blast cause people to coercively respond to the stimulus? What if a particular skin colour permanently on display is associated with a high rate of crime? Will this not cause people to respond in a more uniform way than if there was some other stimulus, like transient role behaviours? It is clear that there are sliding differences in terms of the conditions set to interpret. This paper argues that these are highly implicated in the material and somatic inertia of things. After all, we are physical beings that are dependent on several material prerequisites both inside and outside of us, and social interaction does not reside in a realm totally remote from this. Since Blumer often focuses on the definition of the situation it is interesting to return to what the originator of the concept, William I. Thomas, wrote in relation to it:

One of the most important powers gained during the evolution of animal life is the ability to make decisions from within instead of having them imposed from without. Very low forms of life do not make decisions, as we understand this term, but are pushed and pulled by chemical substances, heat, light, etc., much as iron fillings are attracted or repelled by a magnet (Thomas, 1968: 315).

And:

On the other hand, the higher animals, and above all man, have the power of refusing to obey a stimulation which they followed at an earlier time. Responses to the earlier stimulation may have had painful consequences and so the rule or habit in the situation is changed. We call this the power of inhibition, and it is dependent on the fact that the nervous system carries memories or records of past experiences. At this point the determination of action no longer comes exclusively from outside but is located within the organism itself (Thomas, 1968: 315).

It is self evident that there is much more to arriving at a particular definition of the situation than interpretation. In the statement from Thomas we have a) a limitation of less evolved

organisms to interpret, b) a condition of having to experience stimuli before one can start to inhibit responses, c) an interest in incentives, d) a dependence on memories retained in the nervous system in order to choose overt responses, and e) suggestion of stable changes in the social agent that is carried across situations. This greatly places restrictions on the social actor in terms of if he physically has experienced a stimulus and if his nervous system has been properly conditioned, something that supports the view presented here on interaction. The problem is not necessarily that Blumer sees society as more changeable than other types of interactionists such as Sheldon Stryker (Stryker, 2002a, foreword). The problem is not in kind, but of degree. Blumer also includes concepts of stability in interaction, but the specific conditions for the intersection between choice and structure is not examined enough. These conditions can be accounted for by examining the somatic and material aspects of interaction. In this way one does not need to resort to classic role theory. These conditions should not be determined on a purely empirical case to case basis, but instead be included in the theory itself. This would illuminate the limits of flexibility in social interaction, and symbolic interactionism would be radically empowered in its account of social structure. The problem with Blumer's theory could be related to the need to distinguish itself from the domination of structural-functionalism that was prevalent at the time. But as mentioned, too much stress on the free actor will leave interactionism as a mere appendage to macro sociological analysis.

Erving Goffman

Goffman is a widely quoted sociologist, and needs hardly any introduction, although some clarifications might be appropriate. There is a wide consensus that Goffman's analysis represents a "dramaturgical" approach to interaction (Meltzer et al., 1977: 67). People are more divided when it comes to including Goffman in the pantheon of symbolic interactionists. Some view him as representing the perspective of Durkheim, and he hardly mentions Blumer and the symbolic interactionists in his works (Collins, 1994: 227-8). Others contend that he was deeply influenced by symbolic interactionism (Meltzer et al, 1977: 67-8; Smith, 2006: 23) and also interpreted as a symbolic interactionist that emphasises emotion in the same manner as Charles Horton Cooley (Scheff, 2005). This thesis defines Goffman as a symbolic interactionist for three reasons. First, Goffman's focus on self presentation mirrors the symbolic interactionists focus on the self. Secondly, although Goffman shuns mention of Blumer he perpetually deals with the definition of the situation throughout his work. It seems he often felt it necessary to correct the established view on this concept, a concept that was Blumer's chief interest. Lastly, Goffman's distinctive approach gives not only the somatic, but also the physical items in the interactional situation a central place. This hidden trail in his theory is of vital importance for examining the role of the physical in interactionism. The dramaturgy of Goffman will be presented according to the types of metaphors that stand out in his works, and his empirical studies will be filled in where appropriate.

4.1. Theatre and drama

This is the aspect of Goffman's work that has coined him as a dramaturgical interactionist. The basis of the idea is that the individual seeks to hide negative images, but reveal positive images of himself. He sends impressions. The signs that he sends are signs given, and signs given off (Goffman, 1990b: 14). Sign expressions given are voluntary and intentional. They are used to attain a positive evaluation by others. These are physical objects and movements within sensory range of those present. The tone of voice, facial expression and general appearance all count towards giving a certain image of an individual (Goffman, 1990b: 32). This process has a tendency to collapse if the individual tries to send an impression he is not sincere about. In a performance he will give off impressions that contradict impressions

voluntarily given, and since the observer also is skilled in managing impressions, he will often see through the presentation. The sender also knows this and takes this process into regard when he acts. This is called a control move (Goffman, 1970: 12). And this circle of hide and seek in terms deception and disclosure can move circularly. What is interesting here is that the signs that reveal the falseness are often bodily ones, such as salivation, body heat, or sweating (Goffman, 1970: 31). We cannot control many of our physiological processes and these give us away. Already now we can see that the idea of the competent individual becomes apparent. No matter how the situation is, the individual is active and capable of trying to work situations in his favour.

Goffman offers theoretical considerations on more than the individual and his behavioural motives. Individuals cannot present their selves favourably without someone else to observe them. The observers to the performance are conceptualised as audience. In a social context they are inevitable for bringing about a desired definition of the situation. It is possible to team work for this to happen. When interacting with the audience it is important to maintain a consistent performance, lest one wants to be discredited. To gain a favourable impression the individual can block out parts of the performance from the audience. A particular performance can therefore be said to have a front and a back region (1990b: 110-5). It can also be more intricate than that, but the most important is that some information is hidden from the audience by perception barriers. It can be anything from walls, sunglasses or doors. Restaurants, homes, and other types of settings all have these region bound interactions. The reason is barriers to perception. Other individuals are denied access to a certain type of information by way of physical blocking, absence of talk, or a certain type of behaviour being omitted. These are all physical signs, gestures in the Meadian sense, which are being controlled to influence the definition of the situation. Consistence is paramount to avoid discrediting, so there should be consistency between front stage, personal front and manner. In the negative case, suspicion is aroused. The audience can from previous experience check different causes of inconsistency (Goffman, 1990b: 18).

Choosing concepts borrowed from theatre has naturally incurred criticisms pointing out that the individual portrayed seems insincere and manipulative. That is not the case according to Goffman (1990b: 77-80). In order to attain the desired result when acting, one has to manage the situation as unexpected occurrences arise. So a status needs to be upheld by the right and socially acceptable procedures. Repair work in the situation is always needed. Also, a performance need not be manipulative and false. Goffman illustrates a continuum between performances the actor totally feels is genuine, and purely untrue appearances. The

underlying process is having learnt a way of acting that will produce a certain result. If we break the rules, other people might misinterpret our actions or speech. Foucault shows us in the same vein that discourse puts the premises for what can be said and what is disqualified as untrue (Foucault, 2006a: 74-5). This also includes imperatives for behaviour. To point out the material aspect of this, one needs to follow certain rule in any act. A person who wants to reach a mountaintop must climb because he has no wings. And a person who wants a job must physically face certain specific people and present himself in a favourable way. The limitations are the same type, except other living beings might react toward you in a manner dependent on their previous experience in similar situations. A man who lives near the hospital can actually fake an epilepsy attack in order to get home without waiting for the bus (if we ignore socialisation factors for the time being). The ambulance would take him to the hospital, and he could go home, assuring people he was fine. But this would make the hospital remember him quickly. It would be very unwise to repeat this time and again. It would lead to disclosure, and consequences.

It is important to avoid being discredited, to lose one's face as Goffman puts it. This leads to embarrassment, an emotion closely linked to norms in society. These situational proprieties, even to small details such as facial expressions are important for giving off signals that one is a competent actor in society. Ignoring situational proprieties might suggest that that person is less than skilled in gathering information and utilising it optimally (Goffman, 1966a: 24). So whenever such ignoring takes place people participate in face work, such as saying "oops" or laughing at oneself, indicating that they knew all along that this was an incompetent or irrational thing to do, and that the cause of this was nothing that can be permanently attributed to them as persons (Goffman, 1966a: 126-7). This affiliates well with the discursively based incentive procedure indicated in the chapter on Foucault. There are certain optimal things to do things, and any large deviance from this procedure is by implication incompetent. Of course, Foucault sees such rationality processes as truth effects, and not some higher quality accumulation of knowledge in itself. If one does become discredited, embarrassment occurs (Goffman, 2005: 99-101). There is also another, more directly incentive process involved here. People want to make sure they can trust each other. If enough orderliness is broken down the affected individuals do not feel safe and prepare for their physical safety being jeopardised (Goffman, 1966a:105; 2005: 23). If all social rules break down we have no insurance that people will follow the established proprieties, and physical attacks might be possible. In this way the desire to stay physically safe has a hidden but significant role to play. If we think in social behaviourist terms, animals respond to avoid

harmful stimuli. In this perspective Goffman suggests that a self with a learned store of competence procedures will raise this life preservation drive to a higher level. As such it is important to maintain social support by displaying social competence skills (evolutionary survival demands cooperation and acts or gestures are social in nature), and to uphold predictability among each other so that trust is maintained (i.e. avoiding violence and the like). This is in all probability the basis for maintaining face, consistency in behaviour and avoiding discrediting. Total lack of order increases the chances of being physically attacked, reminiscent of Hobbes' description of pre-contractual society as all against all conflict (Collins, 1994: 179). But since individuals are endowed with selves, they mutually expect consistency in presentations of self which produces trust and social order (Goffman, 1990b: 22).

4.2. Games as incentives

Social interaction is in many instances conceived as games. This is implied in Goffman's other concepts too, especially if interactants desire different outcomes of the situation. It is important to remember that self-presentation requires individuals to control signs they convey towards others. In this way they desire to control the outcome of the definition of the situation (Goffman, 1970: 13). The audience checks whether the person is lying by monitoring consistency between signs given and given off. Most of the time there are severe limitations to how much one can fake a presentation according to Goffman, because people seem better at detecting such presentations than constructing them (Goffman, 1970: 31; 1990b: 20). However, if one takes the inertia of learning discussed in the section on memory in the chapter on Mead at face value, it could be argued that people from different cultures could have more problems detecting false or cynical performances. This is because just as Goffman implies, physically hidden signs are not reacted to, and signs one does not know the meaning of will be ignored as well. Both these sign interpretations are dependent on learning.

In discussing games, and especially games for their own sake, Goffman illuminates some of the motives behind investing in actions with possibly uncertain outcomes. For example, Goffman studied gambling in a Nevada casino. The most important condition for the action in itself is that it is 'fateful' that it has a problematic outcome that is not easily predictable (Goffman, 2005: 149.51). A challenge is therefore created, since the individual is making an attempt at winning the game. Also, in order for things to matter, there must be some consequences for the individual. It should become fateful (Goffman, 2005: 164). Activities that have no consequences are not fateful, and do not arouse anything that fateful

games do. Why do people engage in such behaviour where games are indulged in for their own sake? In short, the display of competency is the main motive (Goffman, 2005: 196). Display in the sense of signalling these attributes to other people and being able to attain the functions that these attributes perform. A person who demonstrates bravery will more likely face danger than one who displays cowardice. In effect, this lands closely to self-presentation, except the purpose in itself is a display of attributes. One presents “character” as Goffman puts it (Goffman, 2005: 214). Weak character is of course bad while standing tough even if things are challenging is seen as indicating a valued set of attributes. Note that also here that valued character traits are associated with strength, problem solving, or other abilities that can overcome hardships of life. Another point is that games in a social context create something of a strain between motives. Games must be challenging, and therefore there will be losers and winners. At the same time, one does not want too much difference or antagonism in a social setting (Goffman, 1966b: 79). If we are too different from the others, the sense of solidarity becomes threatened. The danger of a breakdown of social order (and hence physical danger) looms over the setting. So a balance must be struck. Games seen in this perspective evolve around the organism’s competence, the accumulation of skills and knowledge of it. Of course, as Foucault has shown, procedures on how to optimise life are not of our own choosing. They are already established but changing, and defining one’s own way of doing things will create confusion, misunderstandings and derision. One must be legitimate to win the admiration of others.

4.3. Rituals as competence

Closely aligned with legitimacy are ritualistic forms of behaviour. This is a term Goffman has gained from Durkheim, and it is adapted to interpersonal interaction to account for social order. It is possibly the most structural side of Goffman. “Not men and their moments. Rather moments and their men” (Goffman, 2005: 3). It is already mentioned that self-presentation has a moral aspect. The individual expects claims of who he is to be taken seriously, while accepting others’ claim of their identity. In order for this to be achieved, people must understand each others signals. Again this hints at the limits of information and learning by claiming that respect and propriety rests on a sort of everyday ritual. These rituals are predictable so that we can easily interpret them. Goffman calls these deference and demeanour (Goffman, 2005: 57, 77). Individuals claim a ‘face’, a view of themselves that is positively valued in society (Goffman, 2005: 5-6). This is their line of conduct, and like in self-presentation, both verbal and non-verbal behaviour projects the overall image. It is a body

moving, speaking, and appearing in a certain way. This creates a response from other people, according to procedures for appropriate behaviour. Interestingly, Goffman is delicately aware of emotions in this process, something that symbolic interactionists normally have downplayed. If a person loses face, an array of negative emotions are felt (Goffman, 2005: 8). Lines of action must therefore be sustained, and problems in the situation require manoeuvres to maintain face (called face-work). Goffman divides face-work in two tactics: avoidance practices and corrective practices. Avoidance includes staying away from topics that might cause insult or misunderstanding (Goffman, 2005: 15-18). In this way one prevents threats to crop up in the first place. Corrective practice is redeeming a situation that has gone the wrong direction (Goffman, 2005: 19-23). Apologies and clearing up of misunderstandings can repair a face that has been lost. The reason for these elaborate rituals is reciprocity. An insult might be answered with indignation and repercussions. To better gain social acceptance and prestige, procedures that reassure others that one is friendly and competent are extensively used. As indicated previously, prevention of a breakdown of social rules and solidarity must be prevented since it makes harm more likely.

Goffman's studies on deviance shows how deference and face can be almost permanently damaged. Those that are discreditable must conceal their defect or be labelled as incompetent to the normal "I scratch your back if you scratch mine" ritual that deference and demeanour implies (Goffman, 1990a: 113-5). If we view the patterns in Goffman's works as consistent, two characteristics often emerge that deviants often are assumed to have in common. They are seen as irrational compared to the established procedures for appearing competent (Goffman, 1961: 130). They display deviant behaviour. In effect, they are pushed out of having influence within the definition of the situation, creating a little pocket for the unadjusted. If one suspects mental illness, they might be committed, but the abandonment by those around him is the same as for deviance in general (Goffman, 1961: 133). The materialization of madness is in effect only a breach of socially approved rules. Secondly, they are unpredictable in the sense that they might be dangerous (Goffman, 1966a: 105). A breakdown of social order and the implied threat to physical safety is discussed above. This threat of social chaos is perpetually present whenever they are around. The mad and criminal are seen as dangers both to society and individuals according to Foucault, and Goffman echoes this well. Deviants display gestures that indicate danger and incompetence. Indirectly and symbolically they threaten the physical survival of themselves as well as others.

However, that is only from the perspective of the audience that observes them. One of Goffman's best points is that even in insane places like asylums people follow the same logic

of interaction. Total institutions are mostly successful in redefining individual's self to fit the setting. This is because such institutions are isolated from other communities at all times and are carefully administered to influence the inmates. They cannot mingle between groups to learn or maintain competence procedures from them. Mortification rituals are employed to fit the self of the inmate to the function of the institution (Goffman, 1961: 20-30). Through uncomfortable treatment involving punishment and reward, inmates have their selves redefined. The deference and demeanour reciprocity creates a balance that results in the adjustment of inmates. In order to avoid sanctions from an administration that has the final say, one must agree to the rules established. But this is only half a truth according to Goffman. In institutions that are suppressing, people create forms of resistance. In "The Underlife of a Public Institution" Goffman (1961) investigates how patients in a mental hospital show opposition in an environment that leaves little room for deviance within its walls. By way of attachments and obligations the hospital controls administrates inmates lives. Secondary adjustments are the room for freedom from this type of control (Goffman, 1961: 189). Smuggling and other shady forms of services are made by patients that are supposed to suffer from mental problems. In these way individuals, including the mentally sick can resist embracing the role they are assigned from the environment. There is possibility to modify even a massive assault of expectations on what one is, implying once again an active, relatively free social actor. Also with quite ill patients, when they have been stripped of all resources they use whatever they can utilise to make distance between themselves and their assigned role. They employ situational improprieties. Patients who deviate do so with a systematic purpose, and negotiating with this process reveals that they respond in a rational manner from within the deviant act (Goffman, 1961: 313). Inmates used whatever means to disobey hospital rules. In this way they could resist the imperatives of the organization, and the role they were assigned as patients. But what are really these roles that are resisted? If we look consistently at Goffman's work on competence and the incentive process in Foucault's view of the body, there is often an aversive reaction to roles that denounce actors as incompetent or of low status. It is the opposite of the display of competent attributes implicated in gambling. The individual with his learned repertoire of roles and behaviour is being disqualified as incompetent when he is labelled as mad, criminal or any other category that symbolises resource incompetence. Furthermore, in a total institution administrating people assigned to these categories there is an even deeper entrenching of the role by mortification of the self. The message is that this is what society does with insane people, like you. Having one's resources, learned and physical, disqualified in this manner must be

resisted. The organism wants to be powerful and capable of sustained life. This is the social condemnation of that very principle. As a consequence the individual resists with what is available, in this instance secondary adjustments.

4.4. Frames are physical

This metaphor deals with sense-making procedures, answering the question “what’s going on here?” How do people interpret things that happen around them in a way that makes sense? In many ways Goffman gives a critique of the definition of the situation as a working concept. Additional concepts are introduced by Goffman building further on that theme. People interpret a strip of activity which is “...any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity....” (Goffman, 1986: 10). A frame is thus a set of rules for interpreting such strips of activity in a certain way. Frames are located within each other like a Russian doll. For example, if one sees two people rolling around on the floor, it could be a fight. Or it could just be make-believe, playing, or a sociological experiment. It depends on the context.

A primary framework is the interpretation of physical events as they originally unfold (Goffman, 1986: 21). If some things are located in a certain way, it must be because this or that happened. It also includes behaviour, but is restricted to physical movements in the social space. Mead’s account of the meaning of gestures remind very much of primary frames and interpretation of these. But primary frames can be redefined when we have a reason to suspect that the primary framework is not sufficient to explain what is going on. Then the primary frame is laminated by way of keying, a “...set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else” (Goffman, 1986: 43-4). The primary frame is thus reinterpreted. Goffman has two version of this transformation. Either the primary framework can be keyed into a higher lamination of frame such as make-believe (Goffman, 1986: 48). People seem to be fighting, but they are only playing at it. Or it could be a fabrication, where a person has been contained and thus tricked into believing the current state of affairs (Goffman, 1986: 83-6). In keyed events the interpretation of strips and what has happened corresponds for those involved. With fabrications, there has been an intentional effort to make sure that interpretation and facts are incongruent. One individual has interpreted the state of affairs as something not corresponding with reality. The classic case is a conspiracy or a joke.

Goffman has many detailed discussions of how certain details and conditions modify the framing process, and what people can believe is real. Here the focus is how the physical

and somatic pertains to the framing activity. The starting point is the primary frame, and this in itself suggests that we are dependent on physical movement and causality to interpret events. Goffman conforms this by stating that people do not uniquely create situations. They discover and conclude frames, so the sensing stimuli that constitute frames come to individuals even though they can interpret. In addition, we often conclude with what has happened after it has transpired (Goffman, 1986: 1-2). This portrays the actor's interpretations as being quite dependent on events outside him. Activity and following occurrences set the premises for how we can cognitively arrange these (Goffman, 1986: 247). If we look at how this relates to the keying of frames, there are very specific limits for how high a lamination can go. In theory we can by way of conventional keying rules transform a frame into a higher frame and so on. A movie can be about a movie about making a movie ad infinitum. But in real situations there are limits to this. If we return to the people rolling on the floor example, others laughing could be a sign that it is make believe, or live theatre. But if one stabbed the other in the chest with a knife, very few would still maintain the make-believe frame. The primary frame of another person being hurt is immediately given prominence. Again we are back to the organism's response to the environment in order to preserve safety and life as portrayed by Mead. It is the bedrock of social life. Goffman confirms such an interpretation. When discussing the definition of the situation he suggests there is a material situation more real than subjective interpretations, even in the theatre. "Whether you organize a theatre or an aircraft factory, you need to find places for cars to park and coats to be checked, and these had better be real places, which incidentally, had better carry real insurances against theft" (Goffman, 1986: 1).

4.5. A Foucauldian-somatic view on Goffman

The most obvious parallel with Foucault in Goffman's work is that of visibility. People hide and display signs to escape and direct control of information. Foucault shows how continual visibility makes the individual subject to normalizing judgement (Foucault, 1991: 187). In this way the individual employs barriers to perception in order to escape such judgements. On the other hand, the impression management actor is not in prison. Because of this the individual is a competent interactant with Goffman, while the Foucauldian docile body is such partly because of his incarceration. In total institution mortification procedures make Goffman's actor more dependent on the isolation from the outside world and the treatment he receives.

The incentive process discovered in Foucault's theory is prominent. Individuals seek to gain favourable outcomes and presentations of themselves. They are of course dependent on the right procedures to obtain such benefits, something that resembles Foucault's imperatives contained in discourses (Foucault, 1998: 125). One has to follow the right procedures for conduct in order to appear competent (Goffman, 1966a: 35). Of course, Goffman elaborates this to a much larger degree than Foucault, even to the point where individuals participate in game like activities just to display competence for its own sake.

But much of the similarities end there. The individual conceived in this chapter is dependent on the physical world, and he is dependent on seeking out favourable situations and rewards to secure his own survival. His very interpretation of the world is impeded by barriers and deceiving appearances. He must take what is being given to him by his surroundings in order to interpret events (Goffman, 1986: 247). And yet the social person is in Goffman's account much more capable and flexible. He actively participates in altering meaning in his favour (Goffman, 1966b: 104). He can embrace or distance himself from roles insofar as he pleases. Of course there is a certain limit to both what is competent to do (to avoid sanctions) and what is possible to interpret or know through working with primary frames.

Identity theory with Stryker and Burke

Identity theory is a part of symbolic interactionism, even though it is quite different from what is termed traditional symbolic interactionism, represented by Blumer (Stryker, 2002b: 216). It views Blumer's symbolic interactionism as dissolving structure in subjective interpretations as well as forgoing research methods for accurate science. The starting point for identity theory is to take a holistic perspective on society as patterned and relatively stable. Modern society is specialised and differentiated. Mead is the primary inspiration for this theory, and since self and society are mutually created and interdependent, so the self must be stable and differentiated as well. The differentiated self aspect is derived from William James' notion that "...man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him and carry an image of him in their mind" (James, 1890: 294). However, Mead also discussed the self as having many aspects that answered to the different activities we had with people in society (Mead, 1934: 142). Due to their socialisation in social groups, individuals develop selves in relation to their different activities in much the same way that Mead described the genesis of self interdependent of activity. Therefore people have role identities, a set of meanings we apply to ourselves when performing a conventionalised pattern of behaviour (Stryker, 2002a: 60). Because people learn to view themselves as object through interacting with others, these role identities are dependent on social relations with others in society. Furthermore, the development of these identities is based on behaviour in much the same way that Mead views behaviour as primary to the development of self. Identities are intimately connected to the behaviour related to it (Burke & Reitzers, 1981). Identities reinforce behaviour and vice versa. Having a role identity as pupil implies certain behaviours such as receiving training or knowledge from a teacher, a certain degree of obedience, and more. This behaviour experience is an integral part of learning what a student is. Although it functions as one theory, identity theory has an emphasis that goes in two directions. Stryker focuses on the relation between self and structure. Burke's focus is on the enactment of identities in relation to input in the social environment. We will present Stryker's version first, and Burke's later.

5.1. Sheldon Stryker's version of identity theory

Stryker wants to make symbolic interaction theory more specifically researchable by explaining role choice behaviour, and asks a minimal question. "The prototypical question addressed is why one person takes his or her children to the zoo on a free weekend afternoon, while another person chooses to spend that time on the golf course with friends" (Stryker, 2002a: 60; 2007: 1088). The resulting theory is one where behaviour influencing identities are stacked in a hierarchy of salience. The higher an identity is in the hierarchy, the more likely the identity and its behaviour is to be enacted in different situations. Further a new situation will more likely be regarded as appropriate to enact the identity. Salient identities will also lead the individual to actively search for situations that allow enactment of the identity. Identities themselves are conceptualised as stored amounts of information and they are the basis for interpreting and defining the situation. Here one can see the connection with Mead, in the focus of stability of memory experience and the influence of the "me". In many ways the hierarchy of identities can be seen as an elaboration and specification of the "me" in Mead's theory. When presenting the thoughts behind identity theory, Stryker says: "I believed Mead deserved the respect of having his ideas examined closely, logically, and, insofar as possible, empirically" (Stryker, 1994: 13). By investigating Mead's thoughts the identity theorists apparently want to research the relation between experience (conceptualised as identities in relation to each other) and subsequent behaviour in response to the environment.

Explaining role behaviour by a hierarchy of identities leads to questions of what influences the salience of identities in the self. In Stryker's view, identity salience is influenced by commitment to identities (Stryker, 2002a: 81; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). The quantitative aspect of commitment captures how many people the individual interacts with through that particular identity. As such, identities and behaviour are influenced by others' response to that individual in specific networks, connecting the person to social structure. Furthermore, commitment also includes the intensity of the social relations between persons that one interacts with. Family ties are often more intense emotionally and by stability of resources it brings, than for example distant colleagues at work. Stryker (2002a: 81) also provided a negative formulation of this, by measuring the costs of discontinuing meaningful interaction with people in case one chose other roles. In this way social surroundings have a lasting effect on the individual dependent on where he is physically located in networks, by creating a stable information effect in him that he carries with him across situations. Therefore

the definition of the situation will be not entirely transient but depends on long lasting information that affects role choice behaviour.

Rewinding back to Foucault's position we can see clear parallels between his microphysics of power operating through society to constitute docile bodies and identity theory. Indeed, some have seen Stryker's theory as too determinate, making the very same comparison to argue their case that identity processes and subjectification are similar (Castellani, 1999: 258). It is true that the physical location of bodies in specific networks have profound effect on their selves, filling them up with gestures and discourse in the form of experience. They are subjected to certain gestures in the environment, and these are the building blocks that they employ to make up their world. But they do not necessarily accept anything. Identity theory is supposed to be a limited theory to interaction developed to specify the effect of Mead's account of the emergence of self. It would connect these ideas with how people chose role behaviour internalised in social networks in an empirically testable way (Stryker, 1994). Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the vision of people as incentive seeking organisms is also intended too. In fact, the social relationships that affect commitment are sought out partly because they give benefits, and it would be costly to give them up (Stryker, 2002a: 81). Individuals are not automatons precisely because of this, they are dependent on their surroundings but can choose based on their experience. This is what Mead referred to as reflective intelligence (Mead, 1934: 85-6). What identity theory does attempt, is to account for how individuals' identities and behaviour are affected by their past interactions and experiences, something that does not preclude an active individual. This paper argues that it has many somatic implications that could easily be bolstered to explain behaviour instead of reifying concepts associated with classic role theory. Fortunately, this is clearer in Burke's version of the theory.

5.2. Burke's version of identity theory

The above emphasis in identity theory is on how the location in social networks affects the self. Burke's version focuses on how identities themselves are negotiated both cognitively and behaviourally to maintain consistency in meaning. The self is also conceptualised as a hierarchy of identities here, but the focus is on the internal dynamics that connect behaviour with the meanings attached to a particular identity. It is found that when identities and behaviour have a shared meaning, the subsequent behaviour can be predicted (Burke & Reitzers, 1981). Meaning is here defined as the response to a stimulus (Stets & Burke, 2005b: 46). This closely resembles Mead's definition of the meaning of a gesture, where a gesture

calls out a response from another organism that interprets the gesture as meaningful because it indicates subsequent behaviour (Mead, 1934: 75-7). Stets and Burke argue that the dimensions of meaning are attached to both behaviour and identity, and they all share some aspects "...consisting of evaluation (good-bad), potency (strong-weak), and activity (lively-quiet)" (Stets & Burke, 2005b: 46-7). Activity thus continually feed into a meaningful interpretation of what it means to be a certain type of person in the form of identities, including if it is bad or good and the intensity of the experiences.

Memories of meaningful experiences are used to react to similar stimuli in the future. These meanings thus create a standard of expectation to compare what is happening in a given situation. This is called the *identity standard* (Burke, 1997: 138-9). When interacting, there is *sensory input* from the social situation in the form of self-relevant meanings. The inputs are appraised using the identity standard as a reference, called the *comparator*. The degree of correspondence between the identity standard and the situational input leads to *output*, in the form of relevant behaviour. Burke uses the analogy with a thermostat (Burke, 1991: 837). The setting of the thermostat constitutes a standard, and temperature deviations from the standard either turn the heat on or off depending on whether the outside temperature is too low or too high, respectively. It is therefore evident that the motivation of the output behaviour is to reduce the discrepancy between the identity standard and perceptual input in the social situation. In this way one does not immediately determine the individual's behaviour by external norms or by transient interpretations. Identities serve as mediators between the environment and behaviour.

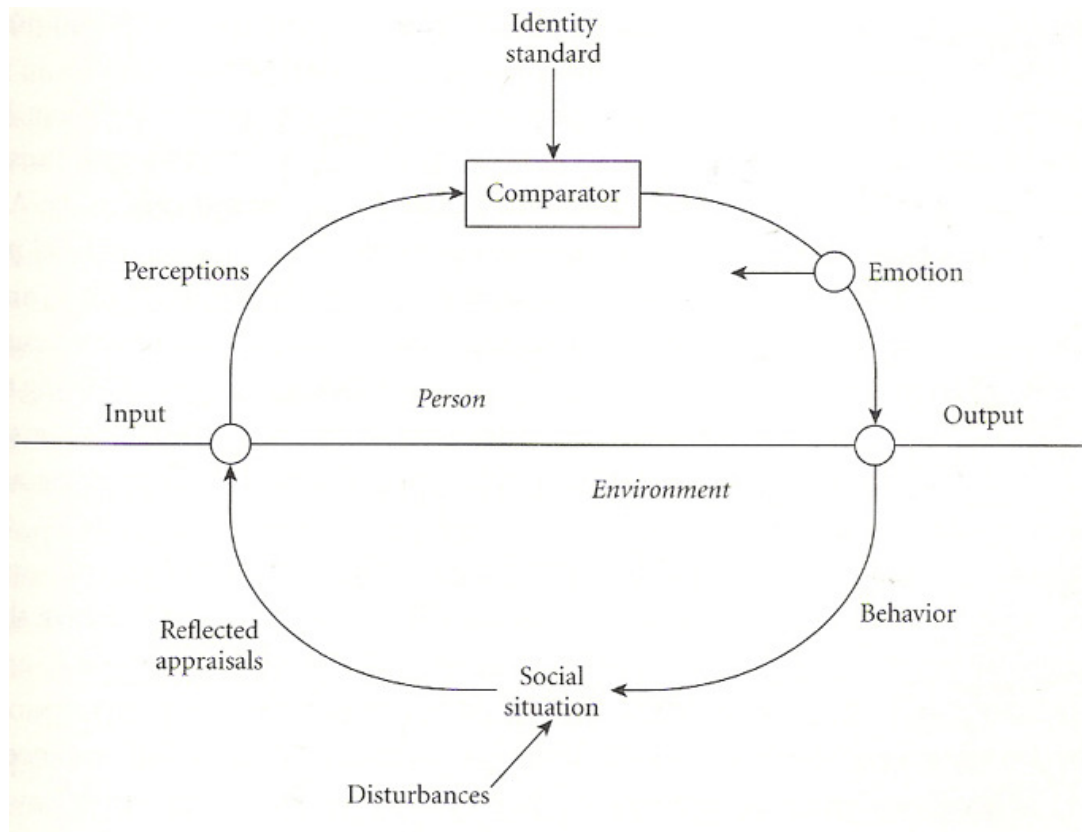


Figure 1.
(Source: Stets, 2006: 97)

5.3. Resources as incentives

This raises two questions. Does not this just displace the determination of the individual by society to an inner forum, where the whole point is to match learnt standards with the environmental stimuli? And secondly, what has all these concepts got to do with the somatic in interaction? Freese and Burke (1994) explore the connection between resources and behaviour in a way that goes beyond the symbolic emphasis traditionally associated with symbolic interactionism and identity theory. Unsymbolised stimuli are also incorporated, tying interaction to somatic processes again. Burke employs Charles Sanders Peirce's idea of signs to deal with signification in general. Learning a sign is to associate that sign with something else. The sight of food is a sign of potential eating, for example. It is also compared to Mead's notion of the gesture, where the beginning of social behaviour brings forth responses from other organisms. Remember the conversation of gestures between two hostile dogs described above (Mead, 1934: 42-3). Freese and Burke connect the sign-learning process with incentives by arguing that "To every configuration of signs there corresponds a

set of active resource transfers” (Freese & Burke, 1994: 10). They locate the incentive process of the organism to stay alive with signs that signify resources that help to maintain this process. In Meadian terms, this would mean that one is motivated to satisfy the stimuli that start acts (Mead, 1938: 136) and gestures signify corresponding environmental stimuli that prevent or enable this.

Resources are defined in very general terms, as something that helps sustain an interactive system (Freese & Burke, 1994: 9). This is of course maintained by individuals, not systems. Signs therefore give indications of active resources that maintain interaction, including physiological functioning. It can be anything from food to social support. As such, signs become meaningful in terms of signifying immediate resources that are learned in the same ways as symbols. Signs have a direct connection to resources, and do not have to be significant in the sense that they have a socially shared meaning. They can be individually learned, and are thus more connected to the somatic need for resources. As Mead has suggested, social needs such as cooperation are also involved in the survival of the organism (Mead, 1934: 227). Freese and Burke also seem to support this idea by claiming that identities are corrected to the correct interpretation of signs that signify resources, because they have effects on survival chances (Freese & Burke, 1994: 8). Resources are tied to symbols as well, but indirectly. Symbols are significant and socially shared gestures or signs. They lift the resource stimuli that signs indicate out of the immediate surroundings. Because of this symbols store knowledge of signs and the resources that they signify. Therefore symbols function to indicate what could potentially become a resource. Potential resources become active by being handled at the right place and time, such as placing food in the fridge for later use, or scheduling surgery with the doctor. Using conventional symbols help manipulate resources and the signs that indicate resources. Symbols and signs help build up the connection between behaviour and identities by way of resource indication. Identities are organised according to this, and behaviour is meant to reduce any interruption to the employment of resources. The identity standard is therefore a recipe on how to accomplish this (Freese & Burke, 1994: 15). In this way the behaviour meant to reduce the discrepancy between perception input and identity standard is behaviour that ensures the supply of resources. Observe that this both accounts for activity of individuals and stability by the same process. Macro sociological phenomena such as social systems are reinterpreted as “...*a differentiable sequence of resource flows so functionally organized for persons as to constitute a dynamic process (or more than one) of evolving structures*” (Freese & Burke, 1994: 18). The social system is a flow of resources that has attained a degree of predictability

to all involved. This approach has the advantage of connecting the incentive of the living body with both signs and symbols.

This conceptualization of identity theory transcends the determinism of pure internalization of identities. The construction of identities is built to support the flow of resources in a manner that the social environment makes possible. This allows the concept of identities to account for adaptation to both the physical world and cooperation with others. The utilization of different types of food available, animals kept, and shelter built can all be incorporated in the process. Symbols are a conventionalized signification of these signs. The optimization of life chances is the driving force behind the learning process that constructs identities. Such an individual appears more as an active agent rather than a passive recipient of norms.

5.4. More commitment

The control system process involved in identity theory has been elaborated to include additional accounts of commitment and an exploration of emotions as well. When an individual succeeds in making the sensory input in the situation correspond with the identity standard, this identity is being verified (Burke & Stets, 1999). This is obviously a positive incentive. It means that one has confirmed that one's behavioural procedure is competent and successful. The purpose of the verification is not the exact actions, but the goal that the activation of the identity is meant to accomplish. "...we need to talk about the goal states that our behaviour accomplishes in spite of disturbances..." (Burke, 2004: 6). As mentioned, this also involves maintaining resources. Since self-verification is a sought after outcome, situations and relationships that facilitate this will be treasured and maintained. This creates cooperation between two or more individuals when they allow for mutual self-verification. Both resources, meanings, and information will thus be patterned such that there emerges a structure in the interaction. Obviously, this has parallels with exchange theory (Burke & Stets, 1999: 351). The advantage of identity theory is that it equalizes the notion of value to what the individual has learned through remembering signs and symbols that influence resources. Value thus becomes relative to adaptive learning of one particular individual. In this way differences both individually and through cultural socialization is taken into account. The meaning that the signs and symbols learned embodies in an identity standard guide the value searching incentive. Verifying one's identity defines the value. In addition, experiencing self-verification through interacting with others increases the knowledge of those individuals, and as they are more predictable they become more trustworthy. This increases the chance that

people maintain those relationships. After some time of stable self-verification the cooperation in the relation becomes a social group in itself, initiating a feeling of “we” (Burke & Stets, 1999: 362). This implies that the “we” gains a symbolic conventionalized status in itself. One such example could be the creation of a family. This also opens the possibility of a division of labour within this group, but it seems not to be empirically researched.

5.5. Emotions

Self-verifications that indicate care or other positive resource transfers generate positive emotions. In this sense a cognitive process of matching self relevant meanings in a situation with a learned standard is well connected with emotional processes. If the discrepancy between input and the identity standard continues, a range of negative emotions are created (Stets & Burke, 2005b). Since identities are social, both meaning and discrepancy can be attributed to either oneself or the other one is interacting with. Based on this Stets and Burke state four hypotheses:

H1. When the source of meanings is the self and the source of the discrepancy is the self, the self will experience emotions ranging from disappointment to sadness.

H2. When the source of meanings is the other and the source of the discrepancy is the self, the self will experience emotions ranging from embarrassment to shame.

H3. When the source of meanings is the self and the source of the discrepancy is the other, the self will experience emotions ranging from anger to rage.

H4. When the source of meanings is the other and the source of the discrepancy is the other, the self will experience emotions ranging from annoyance to hostility (Stets & Burke, 2005b: 52).

We thus have a theory that predicts emotional outcomes in relation to the interactional dynamic in the situation. Conditions in a given situation places conditions on the types of emotions experienced further illustrating how the self and society are two sides of the same coin. The emotions also vary with respect to intensity, with more intense emotions signalling higher commitment to the identity, and chronic discrepancy giving intense emotions as well (Burke, 1991). Stryker (2004) also suggest that intense emotions signal the appearance of novel occurrences, and should be attended to by the individual. Emotions are signals to the self about important happenings. All these emotional processes of course help motivate self-verification.

Emotion and cognition appear conceptually different, but this might be misleading. Both emotions and activation of an identity that seeks verification are responses to stimuli in the environment. Emotions cause physiological changes in the body of the individual, such as more adrenalin. The learned meaning of signs and symbols are also physiologically stored in the nervous system if we take neurological research mentioned in chapter 3 into account (Giese et al., 2001; Martin & Morris, 2002). The wilful choice to react in one way or another is a function of the learned experience and the response to stimuli. Both emotion and the response to signs are bodily reactions in many ways. The benefit of cognitions is the employment of the stored meaning in relation to signs and symbols when a stimulus calls out a response from the individual. Inseparable from this is the behaviour that changes the meanings in the situations so that input and identity standard corresponds. One can see how this parallels Foucault's idea of a body that moves, remembers, and is dependent on discourses in the quest for optimizing life chances. Identity theory is a cognitive theory, but the psychological parallelism that Mead found vexing is nowhere to be found. Both the storage of information built up in a hierarchy of identities, and the subsequent behaviour that seeks to verify them is dependent on several conditions that the environment influences. Mind is thus a reified entity. Discourse also builds up the individualized subject. Mind cannot be said to be something that the body can rightfully claim as its own. It is rather a body that exchanges information with the surroundings. This is the nature of mind and its derivatives, such as self and identity.

5.6. Change in identities

A final point about identity theory concerns the conditions for change in identities. If identities along with their standards remained static, there would not be much adaptability in the organism as such. It is evident that identity theory seems to be more challenged in explaining how the self changes than Mead's social behaviourism. This is because Mead takes a developmental view of the human, including child development. The section on play, games, and the generalized other deals specifically with the child. Identity theory, in its focus on specifying conditions for choosing and maintaining role-related behaviour, will naturally have a greater emphasis on maintaining the identities and their standards once they are in place. If the identity standard changed as rapidly as behaviour, then the entire interaction is evanescent and in free flux, and explanations of why one line of action is chosen over others is annulled.

Burke argues that one of the reasons why some identities change is because they are located at a lower level than others, and they both have implications for one another (Burke, 2006b). A higher level identity operates just as a normal one, but the output from this identity controls the identity standard of those identities at the lower level. An example of a higher identity could be a master status or a personality aspect that operates across roles and social situations (Burke, 2006b: 84). This seems to indicate that higher level identities are chronically activated identities. Being black will for example affect the role of doctor and friend. This raises the question of whether physical characteristics are more likely to be included in higher level identities than roles. However, Burke claims that any identity standards change at a much slower rate than behaviour meant to reduce discrepancy between any identity standard and the perception input.

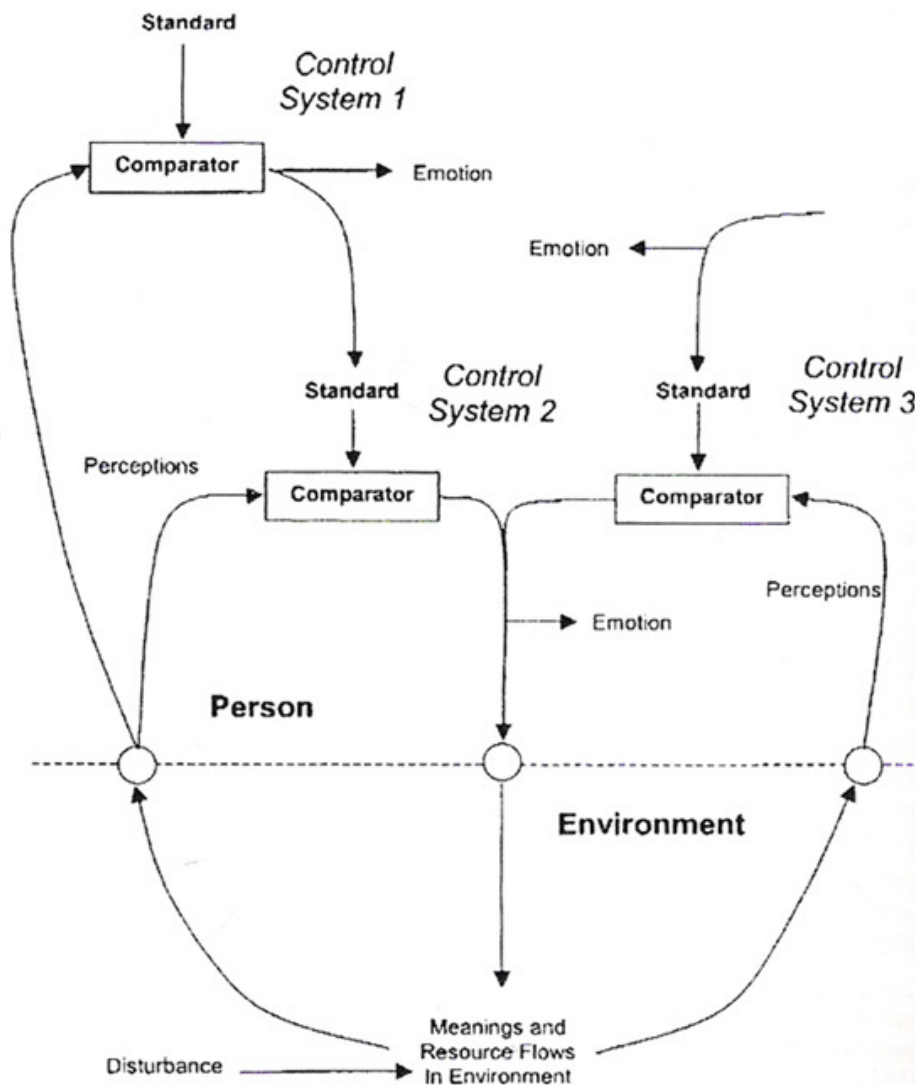


Figure 2

(Source: Burke, 2003: 198)

If individuals find themselves in a new and persistent situation, lack of identity verification can be impossible to avoid. Then the identity standard might change, but slowly and as little as possible. Only in extreme circumstances is there a large alteration in identity standards. Goffman describes such places in his concept of total institutions, where previous roles are not being verified (Goffman, 1961: 14-5). Asylums, prisons, and concentration camps are all such places, new surroundings where one cannot escape the lack of self-verification. In such places one must often adopt and learn a totally new role, scarcely explored by identity theory. The adoption of new roles gives rise to new identities and changes of course the salience hierarchy. But more benign places also change identities, as long as they are persistent. Marriage for example (also sometimes compared to prisons), supply a new situation that often is persistent. Burke and Cast (1997) investigated identities of newly married couples who had a first born child and found that changes in the everyday situation caused the meanings and corresponding identity standards to change over time. It is essential to not lose sight of the bigger view here, as both individuals in the relationship changed their identity standard. This means that each individual managed to change some of the surroundings in the situation by behavioural output to decrease the discrepancy between their sensory input and the identity standard. So there is not only the acceptance of the individual of outside forces. In Foucauldian terms, there is not only the domination of bodies by discourse. There is a balance between the persistence of the individual in order to verify its resource-managing identity, and the adaptation due to the restraining nature of the surroundings. Here we can see the incentive-based motives of the one body.

A third way to change identities could be internally due to the dynamics between identities themselves. When two identities share the same meanings and are simultaneously activated, verifying one identity might lead to non-verification in the other. Burke gives the example of gender identity (Burke, 2006b: 85). The gender identity might induce a woman to be a leader at work, but when she is a wife (but still a woman, so the gender identity is active) her husband expects to be more of a leader in the family than she is. In that way both identities cannot be verified at the same time. In many ways this is not too different from the second way of changing identities, the common difficulty being identity verification because of some interaction with the environment that cannot be avoided. Activation of one identity conflicts with the other identity in terms of meanings in the identity standard. The conflict is external in the first case and internal in the second, but they are both caused by interaction

with the social surroundings. The solution to this internal conflict is compromise. The identity standards will both change as the single one in the previous account of identity change. Both standards will merge to the extent that the discrepancy will be small enough to not cause any discomfort. The woman in the example will be less dominating at work and more dominating in her marriage. If we imagine other individuals working on the same solutions to their identity verification we can see the similarities to a negotiated order, or a negotiation of what the definition of the situation will be. What identity theory does best is to put conditions on why one solution is chosen over the other. If there is a difference in the commitment to each identity, the least committed one will change the most (Burke, 2006b). More people (because of more social ties that constitute the commitment process) will verify this identity, giving it a high sense of being effective in terms of reaching the goals that the identity is built around. This is realized both in terms of performance and the resources it brings. Also, since it is often salient, there will be more activations of that identity that gives it training and experience. Research on married couples indicates that identities concerning spousal roles and gender roles change slowly when they cannot be verified. Over 3 years these change considerably. Both spouse and gender identities merge closer as they share dimensions of meaning (Burke, 2006b). This supports both of the mechanisms of identity change in identity theory. Changing identity standard in face of the continual non-verification illustrates the adaptive ability of humans. By acting to confirm his routines for achieving goals, the social actor is continually fed information that builds up the self. This must naturally have an effect on subsequent behaviour. But as noted the effect is a slow one. It is better to confirm one's competence than to continually be humbled by mistakes. People are prepared to do many things in order to disconfirm their incompetence, like laughing at themselves when they stumble (Goffman, 1966a: 126). This paves the way for theorizing about the relation between the amount of identities and experience, and the pace of identity change. Do experienced people change slower than less experienced ones? This is yet to be explored.

5.7. A Foucauldian-somatic perspective on identity theory

The notion of identity allows for both stability and variation in behaviour, by omitting the objective perspective of the theorist. Identities are procedures for conduct situated within the body of the individual. As such they are based on interpretation and learning. This avoids the limitation of classical rational choice theory by placing the benefit-cost incentive in a meaning and experience based frame. Rationality is not the same for all, but depends on the perspective

of that particular organism. A simultaneous benefit is a sense of stability in the self and its behaviour, because identities are specialised conduct procedures based on experience. These interpretation based guides of conduct are rewards in themselves since they supply an already existing resource to deal with oncoming events. Commitment to even a deviant identity such as criminal can be committed to since it is the most proficient (and possibly the most rewarding) identity for that individual, and there is a lack of experience with other identities that are more in alignment with mainstream society.

Identities also echo insights from poststructuralist theories such as Foucault because the individual is decentered by its constitution based on behavioural experience from outer sources, including discourse. It is constituted from within by information. In identity theory as in poststructuralism, a phenomenological perspective is thus rejected. In the same vein, the body is dependent on the discursive power/knowledge networks that traverse society, providing a connection with the structural aspect of social theory. The situatedness and partiality of info that identities (and lack of identities) provide also create a truth-effect within the organism. A person can never obtain objective truth because its knowledge is always partial and particular. Indeed, “truth” is an empty word, a discursive effect itself.

The concept of the body, deriving from both sources, suggests corrections to those very perspectives. Bodies (as the only locus of discourse and the seat of identities) and their drive to maintain life keeps poststructuralism from total theoretical relativism and identity theory from slipping too far into the reified field of classical role theory. Human bodies with their capacities to learn both signs and symbols display variations in procedures to uphold the life process. Based on previous experience with the struggle of securing life, these bodies can reject what they deem irrational discourses and obviously oppressive roles. It all rests upon an urge to life and previous experience. This can also here be interpreted as the “I” and the “me”, leading us back to Mead. Identity theory is perhaps mostly aligned with Mead. And as stated in the perspective on Mead, Foucault and Mead had many similarities, especially the notion of being constituted by symbols. Consequently the same applies to identity theory then. Perhaps even more so, since both Foucault and identity theory seeks to formulate adequate accounts of structure in society.

Integrating the body into symbolic interactionism: Keeping theoretical consistency

In looking back at the discussion on Foucault and the symbolic interactionists when regarding each of the theorists in the particularity of their own work, the analysis comes off as slightly partial and superficial. Are each sociologist given enough space? Are all of their essential contributions in sociology given enough consideration? Part of the difficulty in focusing on something that crosses schools of thought and the established lines of argument, is that the conceptual turf already covered does not fit one's argument. It is not the sociology of Foucault, Mead, Goffman or identity theory that is the subject, but rather the role of the body and its material surroundings in influencing social interaction. None of the theories covered in this paper hold aligned concepts. Foucault uses the body as a minimal residual that is not explained by discourse, although it is affected by it. And the interactionists considered here conceptualize the organism as the nexus that initiates behaviour in interaction. They all treat the body in some manner and to differing degrees, but the categories employed to signify it and the role each give the body in their writings differ. Therefore it is vital to unearth some implications that have a degree of consistency in this line of reasoning. It has been difficult, and to a certain degree, awkward to draw an analytical comb across such diverse perspectives. The intention itself is perhaps the only part that remained sufficiently satisfying. Namely, that of discussing and analyzing the limitations, sluggishness, and inertia that the body and its physical surroundings impose upon the social interaction in society. It can be argued to represent some of the more hidden aspects of the question on how society is possible. What then, are the implications for the characteristics of the social agent provided by an analysis of the role of the body? It might prove beneficial to start from the bottom and build up to the degree it is feasible. It does not begin with mind. It is absolutely decisive to appreciate the insight in the argument that mind and self usually seen as unproblematic, are in fact as reified concepts as the notion of social system or structure.

6.1. Individuals' development are simultaneously built around incentives and grounded in specific groups and surroundings

Mind is developed as an adaptive ability of the organism. This is what Mead argued by taking a functionalist psychological perspective to his approach (Meltzer et al., 1977: 30. The maturation of the capability to associate one stimulus with another, fuels the ability to interpret and employ gestures/signs (hereafter called signs) and symbols. At the basic level humans and animals share, organisms respond to signs based on previous experiences. This means that they react in a value oriented fashion so that the sign is explicitly embedded in the incentive process, whether it is called punishment-reward or cost-benefit. The basic process is the organism working to uphold the life process and ensure its development via resources (Freese & Burke, 1994; Mead, 2002: 94). For this reason, responses to experiences are essentially resource orientated. As Burke and Freese (1994) have suggested, social structure itself can be viewed as the organized flow of resources in the environment, tying exchange and incentive processes to all levels of society.

Signs that have the same meaning for both speaker and hearer become symbols, and consequently symbols standardise indicative meaning for those who learn them. They also indicate potential resources, things that function as direct resources under the right conditions. This suggests that symbolic capacity is revolved around manipulating and processing resources (Freese & Burke, 1994). But they are dependent upon being learned in concrete situations by specific people. If individuals learn the meaning of some other symbols (like another language or even dialect), they know that. If not, they don't. For example, most people who were born in the US do not normally learn Norwegian. But some do, depending on their heritage. In this way history and the distribution of symbols via bodies that share these in groups represent the basic conditions for developing a self and mind. Symbols that constitute mind are learnt in a particular social context, signifying socially shared labels for objects in the world (Smith, 1996: 192). The notion of discourse is therefore relocated into the social environment inhabited by living organisms.

The ability to learn means that knowledge of signs and symbols accumulate in the organism. Symbols, lifted out of the social environment in which they occurred, are the building blocks of mind and self. This knowledge can be reflected back upon in subsequent moments. There is a conversation between the accumulation of signs and symbols, and the responses that the organism is experiencing in that exact moment. And this is what mind is made up of (Mead, 1934: 98; 1938: 132). Instead of merely responding in a stimulus-response fashion, the individual can select lines of action from previously based experience. It is the

essence of problem solving. A sense of freedom in choosing is enabled, but only to the degree that the individual has acquired memory experience. Of course, the physiological and genetic build up of the organism's body has a big influence on his response to stimuli. Hormones and genes function as modifiers to behaviour (Pillavin & Lepore, 1995), but the constitution of the physical organism is above all a prerequisite for behaviour. Even though biology creates conditions for the formation of it, experience itself grants the ability to guide responses to the environment by choosing between possible responses learnt. Once the organism can respond to himself as he responds to other objects around him he has developed a self. But it is important to note that this self has emerged by the same building blocks of experience as the mind and the physical body of the organism. Indeed, this interpretation assumes that self is the product of memory in the brain. Therefore the horizon of perception through time holds the basic conditions for what the self uses as raw material for its indications. Geography, Culture, family units, and buildings all form specific stimuli for the organism to respond to when developing.

6.2. The constitution of a socially determined mind carries a certain degree of inertia

Once a self is formed it is capable of processing sign and symbolic information. The ability to connect or associate one stimulus with another is however a double edged sword. On the one hand it empowers the organism. The power of symbols and signs is the power to learn, by private or direct experience, or by coded experience (i.e. language). It can thus be one's personal physical responses, or it could be experiences of someone else long ago written in a book. The common function is to signify objects in the world. This is obviously a crucial advantage, since it enables one to draw on previous experiences, and learn others' experiences via a codified language. Meaning thus becomes both transmittable and common, and an understanding between individuals can be established (Mead, 1934: 65). It is consequently possible to coordinate activity in any way indicated by symbols, including complex procedures and a division of labour. Organisms without this ability are restricted to learn mostly by physiological responses and some modest sign learning ability. Exploring reflectively via experience on possible outcomes of actions in a creative way is hence something only symbol wielding humans that can muster. Storing experience in memory in this manner makes one able to adapt flexibly to situations, and simultaneously keep consistence in one's actions and accumulated experience.

On the other hand, what must be acknowledged is that bodies that are able to process symbols become dependent upon and subjugated to their use of these very symbols. If an individual can learn via language how to avoid dangers and gain beneficial outcomes, he has effectively jumped over the process of learning this by trial and error. If Foucault has shown us anything through his archaeology, it is that the rules of thought and conduct in a culture changes throughout the ages. Therefore the individual body, capable as it is with symbolic associations, must take at face value what discourses or symbols signify regarding events in the social environment. This is a huge leap of faith if we come to think of it. And with large costs in freedom. Believing what other humans have described of relations and causality between events in the world exerts a great deal of power over us, because if we treat this information as useful we will either act towards it as if it was true or follow its recipe for conduct. Conversely, given the choice between trying out actions and their consequences on our own bodies, and receiving wisdom handed down from people that have tried this before, the latter choice is in most cases favourable. But to follow this wisdom is to obey the influence of others over us, as previously suggested in the cookie jar example supplied in the section on Foucault. If we are told where and how to get the desired results, we have to follow them to achieve the outcome we want. Much of today's behaviour follows this logic. Most of us do not know what actually happens when we employ technological devices such as remote controls. If something is wrong with such equipment we need to consult experts in order to have it fixed. Discursive recipes for conduct are therefore to a very large degree pervasive and influential.

As a short digress, Leon Festinger's social comparison theory resembles in many ways this process of relations between sign and symbol experience (Festinger, 1954). We physically test out actions and consequences in our own lives. Objects are handled and people are interacted with. But a great many things cannot be tested reliably in this way, either because of danger or lacking resources. In these cases one has to compare our abilities and opinions with others in the social environment. It is theorized that we compare with those that are similar to us regarding abilities and opinions, something that in itself posits a very subjective source of information. The important thing in this context is that this information has consequences for our further conduct, and therefore power implications. In interactionist terms we might say that when we cannot gain sign information about a segment of the environment we turn to symbolic information acquired from others, and thereby subject ourselves to their accumulated sign- and symbol-based knowledge. Information we cannot verify on our own leads us to other people as the next best alternative. In that very same

process these groups influence our conception of who we are and how to conduct ourselves. We surrender part of our behaviour to others' commands. Foucault tends to emphasize that it is the knowledge that commands and defines (Foucault, 1980b: 98). The public executions arranged by the king in the eighteenth century were a type of sign experience, and no less real than discursive information. The problem with the executions was presumably that it could not be applied as continuously as language could supply information, something that had just as important power implications although a less dramatic manifestation (Foucault, 1991: 154-6). Interestingly, Foucault deals very little with intentional attempts to misinform or deceive others. He constantly works from the perspective of individuals eager to learn about the world that embraces whatever is being handed to him. This leads us to the problem of disbelief and resistance.

The only way and reason the organism should disqualify discourse is if he should be presented with signs or symbols that signify some other state of affairs than already appropriated information with regard to the same set of objects. If a child is presented with enough evidence that Father Christmas is a fiction, he will retrospectively disqualify what he interpreted as truth and he becomes more informed to deal with this when encountering the phenomenon the next time. A black person who has experienced the kindness and talent of family members will not be very susceptible to hate speech against blacks. This is because he has personally experienced otherwise. Also, if one is pressed with two contradictory discourses, the solution is to check these against the common knowledge on how the world functions. Through sign experience we can make many inferences about what will happen under certain conditions. Of course this does not invoke the conclusion that the bodily individual is free. He is still tangled in a net of memory based on sign experience and some selective sources of discursive or symbolic knowledge. Stryker and Burke's theory organizes this process as identities with different prominence dependent on social experience and resource benefit. When encountering contradictory information the individual measure meanings in the identities against each other to the most legitimate and rewarding choice based on already existing information. Goffman also seems to support this by suggesting that it is the primary frame of real occurrences that has the final word in interpreting situations (Goffman, 1986: 1-2). Of course, later he goes on to illustrate how people can be deceived by not knowing everything about a certain social domain. This just proves the point about the crucial role of adequate experience. The physical interaction with the environment often acts as a bedrock source of reliable knowledge. In addition, those whom the person grew up with often are implicated in the process of exploring regularities of the physical environment.

Being dependent on this meaningful information places the individual at mercy of where his body has been physically located in the social networks of society. These networks with their money, resources, and more or less rational beliefs, are the sources of discursive or symbolic knowledge that the individual can draw upon. Given the conditions for choice indicated above, it should in principle be a benefit if we have several memberships in social groups or networks. This would make us capable of critically assessing the information from one source against the other. Some research in identity theory suggests that multiple group membership gives more autonomy, especially those that are voluntarily chosen (Thoits, 2003). The picture outlined above is thus neither a totally determined actor, nor a fully voluntaristic one. The ability to choose lines of action is conditionally based on available knowledge.

6.3. The shape and barriers of the physical surroundings help structure interaction

Beyond the development and cognitive functions of the individual, the physical surroundings themselves provide limitations on the freedom of interaction. This includes the bodies of interactants as well. We can roughly divide this into the appearance of surroundings, and barriers.

The physical appearance of the environment has consequences for interpretation of it. Goffman's account of self-presentation is brilliant in this respect (Goffman, 1990b: 32-40). The individual's projection consists of those intentional presentations of signs given. In addition, the interactant gives off signs without intending to or being aware of this (Goffman, 1966b: 102; 1990b: 14). Signs have roughly the same meaning in this context as that of Freese and Burke (1994: 7) where it is defined as an object that stands for something else. A certain skin colour or clothing style can signal a certain type of self projected. Stets and Burke (2005a: 161) situates the same process in identity theory when addressing self-verification. Individuals display cues of their identity so that ambiguity is minimized when others respond to them.

Competence motives are in motion here also, and there is an interest to influence outcomes of the social situation. This is accomplished by displaying some signs and hiding others. The physical perception of signs therefore has a crucial role in determining further interaction. What we do not perceive is not included in our interpretation of the situation. The art of the individual's performance to handle these signs is called the personal front (Goffman, 1990b: 32). The physical setting itself with decorum is a flora of signs that convey impressions of different types of statuses. Furniture and other interior objects are typical

examples. Individuals themselves are also sign carriers. The most obvious part is appearance discovered by looking. They function to signify a social status or state the individual is in (Goffman, 1990b: 34). Sex, age, clothes, and other visual cues can be categorized as signifying something of social significance. Goffman also notes that some aspects of appearances in the personal front are relatively permanent, such as age or racial traits. Conversely, appearances such as face expressions are present one moment, and gone the next, this begs the question on whether the stability of such appearance characteristics influences the degree of to which people will respond towards the individual in a specific and stable way. Consequently, this should influence the self through self-appraisal or role-taking. Goffman does not seem to theorize around this, but notes that a front frequently projected take on institutional expectations and "...tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name" (Goffman, 1990b: 37). Of course, one's sex or skin colour cannot be altered at will, and is just as much signs given off involuntarily while being a part of the front. Thus, physically stable appearances cannot help but become institutionalized according to this rationale. In addition to appearance there is manner, which indicates what role the individual will play in a sense it is the behavioural side of self-presentation. It seems that even though manner might cause definitive expectations, it does not have the sheer physical stability of appearance characteristics. Appearance gives the same sign or stimulus every time the carrier of the characteristic is gazed upon. There should in practice be much more consistency in the reaction to those aspects of appearance. Sex and skin colour naturally should become an integral part of any social interaction. For instance it is widely recognized that immigrants with a skin colour different than the local population are more prone to meeting barriers both with respect to integration and the employment market (Prieur, 2002). Here one can see how stable physical structures of the body and setting have more institutional effect for those within perceptual range. This is also evident in Foucault's analysis of the subject becoming an object of knowledge/power because of his continual visibility (Foucault, 1991: 170-1). In order delineate or generate categories about the individual, he has to remain available for observation at all times. His health and behaviour had to be supervised to generate discourse. Under perpetual surveillance the individual could be subject to discipline as a sanction to his most diminutive conduct (Foucault, 1991: 195). One can see clear parallels with Goffman's treatment of the manipulation of signs. Under disciplinary power the individual itself functions as a stable front. Every time someone gazes upon the subject he is present. In this way he can be classified in a multitude of ways. The reason why the individual is powerless in Foucault's account is because he cannot hide or

display signs as he pleases. He is continually seen and isolated. Goffman's actor also has a back region where he can ease up on the self-presentation (Goffman, 1990b: 114). Thus, some of the more socially undesirable habits or characteristics can be hidden there. For example, people with a discreditable stigma can use strategies to hide them from visibility (Goffman, 1990a: 113-5).

Mentioning back regions brings us to the subject of barriers. Barriers restrict simultaneously movement and perception, but it does not necessarily have to be the case. Glass walls might allow sight and stop movement, for example. Barriers can also be enabling and restricting. By hiding some signs or behaviours behind barriers to perception, the individual can escape certain responses from an audience (Goffman, 1990b: 116). This control of other individual's perception is often accomplished by moving to different rooms or locales. But masks and cloaks can also block vision. Visibility gives a check up function by monitoring the discrepancy between signs given and signs given off (Goffman, 2005: 11-2; 1990b: 18-20). A difference between these might imply that the individual is not sincere. Hiding such signs thereby gives control over the situation.

Simultaneously one can become explicitly visible by means of barriers. The perceptual visibility involved in individualization described by Foucault rests on a special form of architecture (Foucault, 1991: 200). The Panopticon is a prison architecture built such as to have one central observatory that holds everything surrounding it in continual visibility. The inmates are isolated from each other by walls. At the same time they are clearly seen by the guard, while they themselves cannot be sure if there actually is someone observing them. It is the perpetual possibility of being observed that has effect. Even though no one is observing, the inmates will behave as if they might be observed. Power as a behaviour altering force is managed by "a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up" (Foucault, 1991: 202). Foucault notes that this principle of observation can be applied to other areas that can be bolstered by a combination of individualization and observation, such as schools and hospitals (Foucault, 1991: 203). Goffman also examines how gazing gives power by noting how some of the inhabitants on the Shetland isles observed signs given off (Goffman, 1990b: 18-9). The crofter's wife made check ups on body language while talking to see if people's claim to enjoy the food actually was true. And observing people unaware from within a house could detect if they put on a contrived front of politeness just before entering the house. This was done to check for inconsistencies in signs given and signs given off. The emphasis is on the achieving self, and the fact that awareness of being observed

actually puts individuals under influence by the observers is more implicitly stated than in Foucault's theory. Goffman has been criticised for actually perpetuating determinism by avoiding analysis of institutions, leaving his theory to explain how people adopt to power structures via self-presentation and secondary adjustments (Meltzer et al., 1977: 106-9). This leads to the realization that arrangement of making subjects visible and isolated had a purpose. It is to examine them (Foucault, 1991: 187). The examination judges individual bodies entrapped in visibility so that they can be classified in discursive terms. The key to individualization is an ever increase of distribution and classification (Foucault, 1991: 192). In this way individuals have blood types, psychiatric profiles, IQ measures, and a host of other characteristics. The technology of today can make extensive files on each and every person. We all have person numbers, for example. Hierarchical judgement ensures that bodies are motivated to improve themselves, creating a normalizing effect. Constructing all this discursive knowledge about single individuals can consequently be used to punish or treat them. The Panopticon itself was an ideal facility for conducting experiments or training (Foucault, 1991: 203). By controlling the environment, as one does in all true experiments, the treatment could be tailored to each type of individual according to where in the hierarchy or category he belonged. We can here appreciate how barriers are connected to visibility, classification and treatment.

Barriers also restrict access to locales. Many buildings and rooms are off limits for unauthorized people. Just think of how easily recognized the sign "employees only" is for most people. Foucault deals also explicitly with walls. In the Panopticon those confined there are not only visible to the centre tower. They are also separated from each other (Foucault, 1991: 200). The role of physical constraint is essential in the individualizing process of disciplinary power. Barriers serve to enclose individuals, and this has a disciplinary function in itself because it puts conditions on the physical distribution of individuals. It prevents "...distributions in groups; break up collective dispositions; analyse confused, massive or transient pluralities" (Foucault, 1991: 143). In this manner there is no social influence among individuals, especially the type leading to collective behaviour. Besides behaviour, enclosure controls all sorts of transportation. Smuggling, theft, and other loss of property is minimized. And in hospitals the separation of individuals prevents contagion from spreading easily (Foucault, 1991: 144). This method both controls the movement and perception of individuals, while simultaneously laying the foundation for observing and classifying them in tables. People must of course be arranged in a systematic manner in order to classify systematically.

Interestingly, Joshua Meyrowitz (1986) has analysed how the effects of barriers can be overcome by means of media technology. Using Goffman's concepts of barriers to perception, he argues that it is not the setting itself that decides what will occur but rather the flow of information. If individuals can transcend the information limits imposed by barriers, they can affect each other even if they are physically remote from each other. Both telephones and televisions allow for this, either in one way or two way communications (Meyrowitz, 1986: 36-40). Such media have on the other hand a more aggressive approach towards the individual's perception than for example a book that must be picked up and read. In contrast, one can passively be affected by television. It comes to you. Therefore it is a case of the individual being only conditionally in control of the information that enters his perceptual system. Even if signs come from far away they still affect the individual. Beyond these considerations the work of Meyrowitz is problematic in that it does not emphasize any inertia in the self as done here, making comparison difficult. So the degree of rejection of incompatible media messages due to self information already possessed is hard to expect within such a framework. Nevertheless, it is a valuable point to make in relation to barriers and how they structure and prevent some behavioural choices.

6.4. Relevance for sociology. Is there any?

Such a theoretical treatise is fascinating as a review of the explanatory power of symbolic interactionism from a different perspective. Or perhaps as an assessment of the compatibility between the work of Foucault and symbolic interactionism. But as stated in the introduction, the paper is also a preoccupation with the arbitrariness of explanatory concepts in sociology. Consequently, some sort of remedial suggestion is implied in such a problematization of sociological concepts. The results presented in this paper also touch upon procedures for what to look for in interactionist research. It would be unfortunate to label this text as mere social philosophy of the body. The results of the analysis presented here also hold a specific view of symbolic interactionism that must be discussed.

The structure/agency debate in symbolic interactionism has lasted for a long time (Kuhn, 1968a; Meltzer et al., 1977: 53-82). As a group the symbolic interactionist community is very varied with respect to how it conceptualizes fluidity and regularity of conduct in society. Since opinions differ, so do approaches. In fact, Gary Fine argues that symbolic interactionism hardly has a common core anymore as a consequence of incorporating other theoretical orientations in social science (Fine, 1993). This paper is hardly neutral to the issue.

By giving emphasis on the bodies in interaction, mind and self is seen in its constituent parts. The analysis conducted revealed several tendencies with structural implications, such as location, incentive, cognitive inertia, and self permeability in networks. Perhaps the most obvious restrictor to choice is that of cognitive inertia, something that makes the view presented here closely allied with self and identity theorists that stress the transsituational and stable self as a key to account for structure. At the same time, separation between micro and macro levels is repudiated, instead seen as interaction between individuals in groups. Therefore role theory should not be the direction to look for answers to structure, as this is allied with a functionalistic outlook that conceptualizes stability independent of actor's meanings. But then again, Role theory has moved closer to an interpretative and interaction based position to the point where differences are small between the approaches (Heiss, 2004: 96). Instead of resorting to role theory, Mead's original concept of act and response supplies conditions for choosing between actions. Structure is in the choice of act itself. Responses to the environment are stored in the organism as tendencies, and competing tendencies to react causes inhibition of responses. Based on the success of these acts, one of these competing potential responses is chosen (Mead, 1938: 243). This implies that organisms are inherently occupied with exploring their environment, gaining knowledge. The focal point of identity theory is also to examine the conditions for choosing one response or role behaviour over another (Stryker, 2007: 1088). The information about the relative success of one or another type of behaviour can be treated as signs and significant symbols. Foucault illustrates these two with the sight of the execution at the scaffold in the case of signs, and discourses for symbols (Foucault, 1991). Supplying and controlling this flow of information will influence organisms' tendencies to respond in one fashion or another, something that holds power over them. But choice to act is never free. Central to Foucault's thinking is that there is never freedom apart from power relations (Foucault, 2000: 292). Individuals are never free and never totally suppressed. In a sense one can say that the will to knowledge resides between response and experience in the body.

This brings us to the sticky issues of determinism and positivism. By articulating a causal connection between responses stored on basis of success, and the future tendencies to react, are we then not denying the individual any freedom? Where is the "I" that propels creativity in symbolic interactionist thought? This is a fair question. And it deserves an answer. This paper is aligned with an assumption that occurrences, physical and social, have specific causes. Such a theoretical stance lands closer to structure oriented interactionists such as Manford Kuhn (1968b) from the Iowa school and Sheldon Stryker (2002a). Kuhn is

reported to claim that knowledge of reference groups will provide causes of self attitudes that in turn has consequences for behaviour (Meltzer et al., 1977: 62). But such an assessment misses the point. Kuhn also stresses that individuals are not automatons against the social forces of groups and learning (Meltzer et al., 1977: 64). One of the prime benefits of Mead's social theory is that concepts such as determinism are not applicable within its conceptual structure. Indeed determinism is a discursive construct in the Foucauldian sense. Determinism fits into a Newtonian universe, small abstracted carve outs of billiard ball molecules that are isolated from the world surrounding such an idea. In Mead's view individual and environment are mutually affecting each other. "Since the organism and environment determine each other and are mutually dependent for their existence, it follows that the life-process, to be adequately understood, must be considered in terms of their interrelations" (Mead, 1934: 130). The individual is not passive, but its choices are conditional upon the environment since it is a part of that environment. If things are determined, the individual as an aspect of surroundings partly determines the environment too. "Its determination, however, is a selection, and a creation only in the sense of a reconstruction" (Mead, 1938: 417). Singling out one unit in a determination analysis is an abstraction, such as that of the radical behaviourist Watson does when conditioning a rat in an experiment. Mead's theory takes the whole situation into account, and can therefore explain the behaviour of the radical behaviourist in addition to the rat's (Mead, 1934: xviii). Mead questions the very demarcation between the organism and the environment, because life forms constitute the environment. And perspectives that build thought are the abstractions that give the impression of separation between individual and environment. Mead states it clearly: "Reflection is a fact in nature and not simply in mind" (Mead, 1938: 181). This echoes Foucault's discourses that run in capillary forms to create docile bodies. Everything is connected and has a mutually determining relation. The reason this is not deterministic is because of emergence. Even though things have causal connections there are qualitative differences in each occurrence. The classic example is the creation of water out of combining hydrogen and oxygen molecules (Mead, 1934: 198). The shape and quality to water was not there before this combination of atoms. Something new has been created. This qualitative novelty in the environment is usually interpreted as occurring in the mind, but it is not. It occurs as an intrinsic quality in the objective environment itself (Mead, 2002: 118-20). This is only logical since Mead affirms that mind is in the environment too. What about the "I" then? If one looks for consistency in this, the conclusion should be that the "I" is an aspect of the individual because he is part of the environment that is infused with emergence continuously. And it is in

light of this fact that he has an “I”. It is because he embodies emergence as an undivided part of his surroundings. He ingests, manipulates, and exudes particles that he is constituted by. Both individual and environment (including the universe in general) are caught in causal relations in a relentlessly changing world.

What does this mean for the social scientist? Is everything dependent on perspectives and changeable to the degree that what is explained today is irrelevant tomorrow? Should he throw aside ambitions to map causality? Absolutely not. Even if a complete positivism is an unrealistic and utopian ideal, it does not mean that there is no chance to generate some degree of general patterns in interaction that is not bound to specific situations. If social science is only interpretation, it would lose credibility as rhetoric and unable to provide effective solutions to problems in society (Stryker, 1984). If there is no prediction, there is only relativity. Symbolic interaction itself has claims about human nature in general, not a specific person. And as such it has an ideal of general knowledge, at least to some degree. Therefore it deserves to be further articulated and tested. And this view states that the most reliable way is to focus on the material and somatic aspects of interaction. If there is some potential to predict behaviour, this should not be left unexplored. Hopefully the view among scientists is that the more one can predict and explain, the better, even if it is impossible to predict all. Any type of science classifies, and must simplify a complex world in order to explain anything, including the Blumerian type of symbolic interactionism. Positivism should be criticized, but prediction does not become antithesis to social science. Sheldon Stryker says it well:

...there is no need to assume a completely deterministic universe to justify science. Rather, one need only assume that there is some regularity in the behavior one is interested in; and the task of science becomes to describe and explain that regularity insofar as it exists. A search for general “truth” does not require a completely deterministic universe (Stryker, 2002a: 11).

Below will be given three suggestions how a symbolic interactionism that focuses upon the somatic and material aspects of the world would view and conceptualize different empirical areas. This also has consequences for how researchers should proceed to acquire data. Sex, race and sexual orientation are three important areas that sociology frequently includes as characteristics that impart regulation on social patterns.

6.4.1 Gender

The dichotomy and sex and gender are simplifying terms, and should be replaced by reflection on one's bodily characteristics and behaviour based on these. If we take a short glance at the organism from a phylogenetic angle, both sex and gender come off as inherently unstable but inert. The sex of the foetus is created by hormones in the embryo at a specific critical period after conception. Androgenic hormones will cause the foetus to develop into a male, regardless if its sex chromosomes have programmed it to evolve into a boy or a girl (Money, 1987: 386-7). In case of insufficient levels of androgen at this stage the result will be a girl. This means that sex is a developmental process that leads to status as man or woman in several conditionally dependent stages. In other words, it is an unstable process, not to be decided at a certain point. Sex development is an evolutionary benefit over organisms that reproduce by splitting in two, like an amoebae. The exchange of DNA makes individuals different and more adaptive to changes in the environment (Hoekstra, 2005). But it still remains that sex is merely a hormonally sensitive development stage that goes in either of two directions, with the result of slightly altering the body shape and functions in an organism. If one sees this from a poststructuralist perspective, Judith Butler's statement fits this when she argues that both sex and gender are constructed (Butler, 1999: 10-1). Since this account of sex development is a process of stages it also leaves room for individuals such as Herculine Barbin, the French hermaphrodite discussed by Foucault (1980a). The hard distinctions by categories are a need to classify caused by memory, and does not reside in nature. However, once the body has been shaped, the characteristics tend to be stable. These stable sex differences are responded to both by the individual himself and people in his surroundings. The stability of characteristics will cause a strong monotony in the responses to gender related meanings in the situation. Meanings associated with a sex can vary between cultures, but physical gender signs are stable. As a cognitive schema, tactic for self-presentation, identity, or a part of the "me", the culturally shared meanings learned via play, game, and generalized other consequently are stable. Another feature of the physical inflexibility of sex attributes is that meanings derived from it are constantly relevant, both because they are usually always visible (gender can usually be identified) and they are salient most of the time caused by uniformity in responses. In an identity theoretical perspective, gender identity is always activated and interacts therefore with other activated identities. Identity non-verification can occur if other identities are incompatible with gender identity, and this has significant consequences for further behaviour, such as avoiding situations that cause identity conflict, or changing identity standards (Burke, 2003). Sex or gender is something one enacts, but with a

stable, unambiguous performance due to the consistency in meanings learned. Research on gender relations therefore should focus on how people enact, justify, and take for granted behaviours and beliefs connected to sex. But the focus should also be on the individual's background, as learned gender related meanings tend towards stability. And connections to groups that share uniform beliefs should reveal much of what a person's gender identity contains.

6.4.2. Race

Racial characteristics follow many of the same patterns that gender does. Skin colour and other racially associated characteristics are hereditary. Skin colour is for example a physical manifestation of the pigment melanin produced in skin cells. All humans produce it, but the degree of darkness is based on how much melanin is produced. This too is a stable and prominent in terms of visibility. Hiding one's skin colour is difficult in social life. Naturally, the following responses to this attribute are invariable, depending on what group one encounters. Associations are therefore also stable due to appearance. Racism does not exist everywhere, but when there are racist beliefs in a group it tends to be stable. Inability to get jobs for visible immigrants suggests this in the work of Prieur (2002). Also, immigrants tended to be very influenced by their own ethnicity in relation to their identity. As with gender, these stable attributes tend to be responded to consistently both by the individual and others in the environment. But the stability in such traits can apply to the way we behave to those who are different than ourselves. A family with racist attitudes tends to pass these off to the children if they do not know anyone that have these attributes. The racism will therefore not be disconfirmed by practical contradicting examples. If you think of it, most people who hold racist attitudes do not know many of the people they discriminate. On the other hand, those people who are discriminated against grow up in families that daily confirm that these stereotypes do not apply, at least not against themselves. This is because the traits that are used as a basis for identifying the recipients of stereotypes are hereditary and shared in families. In the same manner as gender identity, racial or ethnic identities will most probably be activated continuously and interact with other identities in the situation. However, gender is prevalent everywhere in most societies, while ethnic or racial traits need not be. There might be differentiation in groups that do not intermingle. Because of this, ethnic identity might be more focused upon, and not taken for granted in the same manner as gender. It is more unusual in some circles and might even be labelled exotic. Genetics, appearance and behaviour are all interconnected. But this process can be applied to other attributes than skin

colour. The head scarf worn by Muslim women today are a source of controversy, both politically and socially. But most importantly, they are continually visible. How does one for example identify a Muslim? By visible cues such as skin colour and head scarves. Islamophobia therefore does become a form of guised racism by the way Muslims are identified in everyday life. This also illustrates the advantage of concentrating upon the body as an influence in interaction. It is there continually. Clothes might be taken off, but amputation is needed for body parts to come off. The case of the Muslim head scarf is special, in that it has religious significance. How does one go about collecting data on race? As with gender, one can clearly perceive that the past reflective interactions regarding the individual's bodily structure is crucial. Both practical interactions such as self-presentation and demographics of mix between ethnic groups play an important part. But these do not explain how these patterns came into being. To do that one must dwell upon the individual's past relation to its body. Interviews capture both meaning and past. And insofar as some concepts can be operationalized, they can be employed in surveys to analyse large-scale demographic patterns.

6.4.3. Sexual orientation

Psychologists have for a long time used the term sexual orientation to designate some inner essence that decides what the overt sexual behaviour of organisms. In order to separate between sexual acts and sexual orientation as a state of being, Money provides an example of someone being forced to perform sex with a person of the non-preferred sex. They would do it to save their life, but this are not what they actively desire as an uninhibited motive (Money, 1987: 385). Such an example gives reason to assume dividing lines between homo- hetero- and bisexuality. These divisions are exactly what both Judith Butler (1999) and Foucault (1998) question and problematize in their work. Focusing on the somatic goes beyond a post-structural dissolving of sexuality into an epistemological bricolage assembled and disassembled as one sees fit. It is precisely this "dissolving" that stunts the explanatory value in stability and structure while questioning its inevitability.

There is more to sexual orientation than acts and inner preferences. There is also the specific signs themselves that signal that this body is a female or male. Presumably such signals are important for sexuality since they are the physical and visual stimuli that enable us to have sex with another person. And people have preference for different attributes and acts within their sexual orientation. Heterosexuals are as different as homosexuals inside their respective categories when it comes to their sexual conduct and desires. If we divide this

subject into as many categories of attributes (breasts, penises, shapes) and acts as there roughly are desires, we also make place for sexual paraphilias such as sadomasochism and other desires normally assumed to be outside of the realm of sexual orientation (sodomasochism is for example included in sexual disorders in Atkinson et al., 2000: 528). These also are dependent on signs that indicate attributes and acts. The degree that these units of desire are determined by genetics or culture (i.e. the nature-nurture debate) shall not be reviewed here. What is of importance is that some of these preferred attributes and acts are highly connected to gender. A person might find foot rubbing and breasts the most sexually attractive. Foot rubbing can in principle be performed on anyone with feet. But breasts as in female mammae are not often found on male bodies. Conversely, penises or other male-specific characteristics are often lacking in female bodies. In this view, everything is reduced to fetish-like attractive components, common sexual activity and the more unusual varieties alike. People have preferences for some attributes or acts, whether they are genetic or culturally induced, but these characteristics are located on one gender more than another in a physical and practical way. In order to perform sex, the individual must come to grapples with the material and social world that surrounds him. Therefore the basic unit that arouses sexual attraction strongly influences what leads to desire. If it is attached to a man or woman, the individual seeks out that gender to realise his desire. Attributes or acts come first, communicated by signs. Gender preference is subsequently organized around this desire. The reason is that some attributes are very unevenly distributed among the sexes. This view is in complete agreement with Judith Butler's assertion that feminism's focus on gender has much in common with theorizing around sexual orientation (Butler, 1999: xii). Sexual orientation is connected to gender by the fact that it is dependent on sex or gender differences as a platform for its manifestation. It is a preference for a certain set of attributes that are bound up with gender. The reason this theory is more fruitful than a post-structuralism one is that it not only can account for materiality, but is based on it. The non-discursive is the very bedrock that allows for articulation of symbols or discourse in this theory. When performing research in queer or sexuality studies, the location and materiality of specific desires must be taken into account before one connects this to construction of identities or other interaction practices, such as sexual scripts (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). From there on the inertia of cognition should be explored as with race and gender.

6.5. The inside of the body is more important than the outside

By discussing the consistent patterns that the materiality in interaction present, and how this might be researched and conceptualized in empirical work, two more general aspects emerge. The somatic and material are divided into two tendencies. One is on the outside of the body, with barriers and shapes that both constrict and enable. This also includes the shape and appearance of the body itself, as is partly the case with sexuality for example.

The other aspect of the analysis concerns what is inside the body, that which has cognitive implications. The behavioural response to stimuli become the basis for self and mind, so physical barriers do interact with the individual after all. The distinction is merely a heuristic tool but useful nonetheless, because signs or gestures build up a mind and self by the help of memory and incentive. This process imparts a degree of inertia in the form of cognitive organizations of information that have different degrees of prominence in the mind. Stability in behaviour is one of the outcomes of this self process.

This self or identity inertia calls for an explanation of the individual's past responses and with whom he interacted. In all three examples, interviews about people's past is suggested as valuable because of its potential to explore the connection between the physical behaviour and self through the passage of time. Inertia in the mind of the organism is logically something stable that physiological organism brings with him across situations. The material side of events outside of the body changes as the individual moves from place to place, although they can radically restrict choice of conduct in that specific situation. Walls, institutions, shops and so on affect us. Naturally, then, the most influential mechanism to maintain stability in interaction is the processes that operate inside the body. Not because it is a psychological pre-given core of the self. But rather because of the concrete and specific contents of experience that fill up the body. This is also processed by memory and a biological motive for self maintenance. It is suggested here that all of these processes are in themselves also bodily processes with their own limits for flexibility. Keep in mind that although it sounds mechanistic and limiting, it is handled dynamically in the situation by a real, living person (remember the broken stick-example in the discussion on Mead).

Such an approach calls for investigating the past of the individual to explore the contents of the self and how it came into being. Another parallel with Foucault, since he calls for an archaeology of knowledge as transmitted throughout society, while this paper argues for an individual historical archaeology. The results should not be individual in themselves, since the signs and symbols that will constitute the self are socially transmitted.

Hence it would be a history of groups. Ignoring the historicity of the interconnectedness between individual and group will run a high risk of merely revealing idiosyncratic patterns of interaction between biography deprived generic actors. This is also why symbolic interactionists who see the self as global tend to explain interaction as process, while those favouring a composite self gives a more patterned or regulated view of interaction (Meltzer et al., 1977: 94-5). Thus, memory and past is vital for interaction. From the approaches examined here, identity theory captures this best. In identity theory the commitment to others in social relationships and the intensity of those relations influences what part of the composite self will be enacted in a given situation. Social membership influences self influences social behaviour. Of course, mere membership or comparison taken is not sufficient to explore the conditions around commitment to social sources of the self. Recently acquired relations cannot be as influential as, say, long term family relations. The degree of conflict should also shape the degree of commitment to groups. This is largely left unexplored by Stryker and Burke, so identity theory as a general perspective has some distance to run if it hopes to gain such a status. Nevertheless, identity theory appears best equipped to handle the task of accounting for stability in the self.

Goffman also considers how some self presentations or consistencies in conduct become institutionalized, or is arrived at instead of recreated (Goffman, 1986: 1-2). But he leaves it to a much larger degree as a phenomenon that must be empirically arrived at retrospectively, and not as an explicit part of the theory itself. It is rather moments with their situational proprieties that decide the social outcome (Goffman, 2005: 3). But do these situations not vary for the individual as he enters and exit them? Does this not make him only adaptable to the situation and totally unstable? If this is the case, it becomes unrealistic when one starts questioning how these situational expectations originated in the first place. Identity theory aims to specifically test Mead's propositions, while Goffman seems strangely vague on the relation between novelty and regulation in social life. This is not due to Goffman's reliance on qualitative methods such as participant observation, as opposed to the extensive use of quantitative approaches often used in identity theory research. After all, what is the difference between concepts such as identity standard and output, and Goffman's metaphors of personal front and primary frame? Both are arrived by a method of vacillation between observation and theoretically inspired concepts. On the other hand Stryker is consequent in stating that empirical research on a theory of human social nature only makes sense if it has the purpose of accumulating reliable knowledge of it. Such a result can best be achieved by the use of concepts suitable on large segments of the population, and therefore could be

generalised beyond the specific situation. Survey and statistical methods does indeed seem to be a necessity for a theory that aims at such a position. Conversely, identity theoretical concepts can be researched with qualitative methods both to develop new concepts and triangulate more large scale methods. This has been done by Tshushima and Burke (1999).

6.6. Keeping an eye on what's important

With all this focus on method and relevance it is easy to get tangled up in both terminology and methods. This can easily lead to a loss of what is important here: Theory. The main theoretical message is that interactionists should focus on how interactions as well as selves are dependent on somatic processes or located at specific physical points. A lack of stability in behavioural patterns (i.e. structure) is a major reason symbolic interactionism is seen as an incomplete and partial sociological theory (Meltzer et al., 1977: 96-100; Stryker, 2002a: 149-51). It should therefore make sense to assign stability a central focus while still taking meaning and interpretation into account. The content of, and the bodily means by which, self is constituted and functions, should restrict the actor's choices in society. Structure is here seen as partiality and particularity in individual's knowledge that they seek to govern resources by. It is also the blind gaps in what they are competent at, physically and socially speaking. There are many things they do not know, and as a consequence they ignore these unknown bodies of information. Individuals are not over-socialized, but rather a partially ignorant physiological organism. This gives rise to regularity in what individuals believe is competent or optimal to do. The meagre amount of information learnt is acquired by certain people, at certain places, and in certain social contexts (such as those that might qualify as belonging to a certain socio-economic class). These can be measured by social scientists.

It is sad then, that there is no room in this paper to explore the relation between where the individual usurps his symbols and signs, and the consequences for his behaviour, such as reference group theory (Singer, 2004). Interactionists should seek to identify where knowledge comes from in groups, and what the conditions for accepting or rejecting encountered knowledge are. Doing that would also benefit sociologists working within a Foucauldian framework by supplying more details on the capillary forms and nature of power. Manford Kuhn's delineation of the orientational other from the otherwise blurry reference group concept seems to target the question of who supplies knowledge successfully to individuals. In contrast to reference group's comparative or normative functions, the idea of the orientational other refers to the specific entities. It encompasses the groups or networks that the individual is committed to, and provides him with his vocabulary, categories to

classify the world and himself, and has consequences for his stability and changes in self (Kuhn, 1968b: 181). The limits imposed by sources of knowledge is given due here. For example, research using the orientational other has showed the connection between older siblings sexual behaviour and the sexual debut of their younger siblings (Widmer, 1997). It is entirely possible to link this process of sources for knowledge and social class, and even social mobility. Because people have a limited knowledge of their surroundings and a specific motive of handling it in relation to resources, individuals have effectively a tendency to use what they already have. As previously indicated in the section on Mead's account of reflective intelligence, information based conditions must be met in order to have a choice of conduct. One must have some preliminary knowledge of what outcome to expect from an act in order to work it through in the mind, and make a choice based on this assessment. Applied to class thinking one must gather knowledge of different classes and what to do in order to join it in order to consider actions that will lead to class climbing. Of course many of the groups that supply the individual with knowledge are contained in what is a class. Therefore class climbing information will frequently be irrelevant. To perform such analyses from an interactionist theoretical perspective, researchers must remain as close to the somatically and materially observable world as possible. Keeping the focus on the substantial reality of social interaction, and not get lost in arbitrary concepts and terminology, will potentially hold the most explanatory promise. The facts of material and social life are that of location, memory, and incentive that the body is entwined in. Symbolic interactionism can in this way indeed be scientific in the sense of accumulating theoretical explanation of regularity in social behaviour (Stryker 2002a: 10-4). It can fit entirely alongside other sciences such as neurology, physics, and biology, while still acknowledging that a positivist position is untenable because of emergence in nature. It is certainly not cut off from physical reality, and should neither be assigned a position as secondary appendage to macro sociology. Not investigating the conditions for choosing lines of behaviour is avoiding it. Sheldon Stryker puts it succinctly: "... to see behavior (in part or even totally) as the product of choice is certainly not to view behavior as random" (Stryker, 2002a: 11). An overly autonomous individual that moves freely and makes abstract self-indications is a symptom of this absence of investigation. The role of the body and the material is suggested here as a stepping stone to investigate these conditions for behavioural choice.

6.7. Conclusion

Placing a perspective supplied by Foucault on interactionism has supplied a variable result. None of the interactionists investigated used complementary terms, and so the result is dependent to a heavy degree of interpretation. Theoretical points also seem to overlap in many cases, such as the constitution of the individual and the ability to indicate via memory. By reducing the social individual to a “docile body” certain regularities seem to emerge.

Foucault seems to make some implicit assumptions of individuals in order to make his discursive theory plausible. These were processes of categorization, incentive, and learning. All three seem taken as an a priori property for the docile bodies in Foucault’s theory. Employing these at George H. Mead, Erving Goffman and the identity theory of Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker had mixed Results. Goffman was the least structured, followed by Mead, thus making identity theory the most structural interactionist theory. This was also the initial impression before analysing the theories. Combined from this Foucauldian perspective on the body in these theories emerged some general conditions.

Individuals develop their selves in specific surrounding with the intent to preserve the life process. The interaction of gestures that later form the self are based on very specific people and physical surroundings that reward or punish the individual. As a consequence, the groups and the environment that the social organism interacts with supplies both sign information and symbolic language. These will serve as building blocks for both self and subsequent behaviour. This is a biographical or historical process that the individual is shaped by.

The mind that has emerged carries a certain degree of resistance to flux. Abilities to manipulate symbols will force the individual to accept information conveyed through others, further subjecting him to become socialized by his surroundings. Resisting information can be done in the case of contradictory information, with familiar information often being the favoured one. Also the individual has stored some information with different prominence based on experience. These will influence the choices he will take in different situation Those aspects of the environment that are not learned will be ignored. As this is a tendency that the organism carries with him inside his body (while still acting with the environment), it calls for a consistent and influential source of structure in interaction.

The appearance of surroundings conveys information of social significance. The more stable these shapes are, the more it will influence interaction because of the continual and monotone responses that will be elicited because of it. Barriers can also make one visible and

hence subject to responses, while hiding some signs and revealing others help agency and control in the situation. Barriers can also limit movement by restricting the individual's access to certain areas, which has consequences for information encountered. Although these barriers and shapes have immediate effects on perception, they are located in the situation, and their influence is lost if the individual exits. Its structural consequences are thus fleeting.

This paper suggests that the physical and material aspects of interaction will give the researcher something to keep a conceptual eye on instead of employing abstract categories. Of course a concept such as self is something inside of the organism, but it is derived from acts in relation to concrete surroundings that can be observed. The material world is ever present also in social interaction, and building concepts around this will also provide the most structurally potent concepts. A fleeting or evanescent self that is not grounded in specific groups and conditions will certainly not accumulate theoretical knowledge on symbolic interaction.

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This paper consists of 35 505 words.