Goffman, Parsons, and the Negational Self

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Abstract

Erving Goffman's emphasis on impression management in everyday life means that for the most part persons offer only partial or incomplete glimpses of themselves. Indeed, under specifiable conditions self-presentations may take the form of a negational self. If negational selves exist at the person or individual level, then they must also exist at the collective level (that is, if we are to take seriously such notions as the social mind, collective representations, or even culture). Understandings of how this negational self appears and is produced at various analytical levels (micro, meso, and macro) can be anchored via a conceptual schema which merges Goffman's own identity typology with the three-world model of Jürgen Habermas by way of Talcott Parsons.

Introduction

The *negational self* is a self by default, in that public social encounters rarely afford persons the opportunity to positively affirm their own selves (Chriss 1999a). Rather, for the most part persons are busily framing themselves from view, offering only limited glimpses of a "true" self through indirect and sometimes obfuscatory devices and strategies such as role distance, deference, modesty, accommodation, face and face-saving, and body glosses to name a few.

The first part of the paper will summarize the symbolic interactionist perspective on the self. Although many observers suggest that Goffman falls squarely in the Meadian line regarding the social psychology of the self, through this brief survey it will be demonstrated that Goffman's work is imbued with enough structuralist and functionalist elements to render such an easy alignment with standard social psychology problematic. Once the nature of Goffman's position on self and identity is secure, I will then summarize the work of other authors who have developed approaches that to varying degrees are compatible with the concept of the negational self. In the last sections I will present an analytical schema, derived from Goffman but also from Parsons and Habermas, which explains how the negational self appears and is produced at various levels of the social system.

The Self in Sociological Social Psychology

In sociology and the social sciences today, the concept of the "self" is widely employed and accepted as a more or less stable feature of human reality (see Weigert and Gecas 2003). The modern understanding of something called a "self" begins with Rousseau, but

becomes more fully formed and less pathological in the tradition of German idealism, represented in the writings of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel (for summaries, see Ellwood 1938; Habermas 1971, 1973; Henrich 2004; Seigel 2005; Solomon 1988). The self appears, albeit in muted form, as an aspect of the reflexivity posited by Dilthey, where the life unity is understood as a person's reflecting back on his or her self in its historical setting (giving rise to both hermeneutics and certain forms of phenomenology, see, e.g., Carr 2003). By 1890 William James, along with other American pragmatists such as Charles Peirce, James Baldwin, and Josiah Royce had developed versions of the self, and these were influenced by German idealism even as these pragmatists were attempting to purge metaphysics from their systems. Modern symbolic interactionism, which holds the self as a central concept[1] as represented in the writings of George Herbert Mead and others, was influenced in its conceptual development by functional psychology, German idealism, the Scottish moralists, pragmatism, and even evolutionism (Edgley 2003; McCall 2006; Reynolds 2003).

For Mead and most contemporary social psychologists, the self arises as a result of reflexivity, that is, the human ability to reflect back on one's own thoughts and actions in interaction with others. Reflexivity may appear in the form of the internal dialogue between the "I" and the "Me," through more hermeneutical or phenomenological orientations, or even through overtly linguistic forms. Indeed, one of the most public and visible ways identity is constructed and negotiated is through talk (Cerulo 1997; Howard 2000).

Gecas and Burke (1995) argue that within social psychology there are four general orientations regarding the conceptualization of self and identity, namely situational, social structural, biographic-historical, and intrapersonal. The authors place Erving Goffman, for example, within the situational category insofar as this orientation emphasizes the emergence and maintenance of self within (most importantly) face-to-face situations. By contrast the social structural approach to self and identity represented by Talcott Parsons focuses on the social structure of role relationships in group contexts (Callero 1994; Gecas and Burke 1995).

The situational approach has close affinities with the "social construction of reality" approach to social explanation (see, e.g., Berger and Luckmann 1966), emphasizing as it does the fluid, dynamic, and negotiable aspects of self and identity. According to this line of thinking, for example, from the structural side of self and identity, Parsons (1951) placed emphasis on the normative dimensions of role and role performance, whereas from the situational side Goffman (1959, 1974) emphasized the situational contingencies which shape or "frame" understandings of these role relations (Chriss 1995, 1999a; 2007; Reitzes and Mutran 2003).

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[1] As Baumeister (1998, p. 681) reports, the concepts "self" and "attitude" appear most frequently in psychology journals, and it is very likely that the self is among the most discussed concepts appearing in sociology journals as well (see also Owens 2003).

Setting the Stage: Goffman and the Self

Although the majority of commentators share Gecas and Burke's view that Goffman falls squarely within the situational or symbolic interactionist camp (see, e.g., Levine 1995), others suggest that Goffman is as much a structuralist, or functionalist, or perhaps some of both (e.g., Brown 1977; Chriss 2003; Gonos 1977; Gouldner 1970). Because they place emphasis on the mind, interactionists tend to view social situations not from some objective or external standpoint, but from the perspective of the subjective states of actors engaged in face-to-face interaction. As Gonos (1977, p. 863) suggests, for interactionists "the starting point for social analysis is the meaning that actors give to their situation."

Although Goffman (1974) suggests in *Frame Analysis* that the perspective he employs is situational, by which he means a concern with the sorts of things individuals are alive to at any particular moment, his notion of "frame" serves effectively to diminish the importance of the work of defining situations in the here and now. In other words, the interaction order is propped up or sustained by a presumably more primordial set of social conventions (framing rules) by which interactants are able in the first place to understand and haggle over the range of possibilities for making sense of any scene toward the ultimate goal of defining a situation. Similar to Durkheim's dictum that human society is a reality *sui generis*, Goffman viewed human face-to-face interaction as the interaction order *sui generis* (MacCannell 1990; Rawls 1987).

The idea here is that there are important elements of social life that predate any particular strip of activity within which persons find themselves in the immediate presence of others. As Goffman (1974, pp. 1-2) stated:

> Defining situations as real certainly has consequences, but these may contribute very marginally to the events in progress; in some cases only a slight embarrassment flits across the scene in mild concern for those who tried to define the situation wrongly. ... Presumably, a "definition of the situation" is almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily do not create this definition, even though their society often can be said to do so; ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly.

Goffman is warning that we must go beyond the definition of the situation because all social systems can be shown to possess particular understandings of what it means to be of a certain age, sex, class status, location or territory, that is, distinct cultural configurations designating proper ways of conducting oneself. As Goffman (1959, p. 75) explains, "To *be* a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto."

This resembles Talcott Parsons' notion that culture fulfills the pattern-maintenance function for the broader social system. This is because the role concept, which both

Parsons and Goffman employed frequently (Chriss 1999a), can be used at both levels of the social system simultaneously (Bradbury, Heading, and Hollis 1972; Popitz 1972). That is, at the micro or situational level one may emphasize the way the self emerges and is maintained in situations, while at the macro or structural level one may emphasize the consequences of role relationships as these are attached to particular statuses or positions in society. The role concept can be used at either end of the micro-macro analytical spectrum, or anywhere in between for that matter. Indeed, theorists as seemingly diverse as Parsons and Goffman have found role theory useful for their own purposes, and this owes primarily to the fact that the role concept has at least four distinct historical sources (Chriss 1999a; Joas 1985; Levine 1995; R. Turner 1985, 2001): (1) the work of Park (1926, 1927) and Mead (1934) giving rise to the symbolic interactionist tradition; (2) Lewin's (1951) gestalt theory; (3) Moreno's (1934) therapeutic program known as sociodrama; and (4) Linton's (1936) anthropological theory of culture.

It is also worth noting that these four historical sources of role theory align remarkably well with the four general orientations to the conceptualization of self and identity suggested by Gecas and Burke (1995) above. Table 1 illustrates this alignment.

Role Theories	Self and Identity
Symbolic Interactionism	Situational
Gestalt Theory	Intrapersonal
Sociodrama	Biographical-Historical
Linton's concept of culture	Social Structural

Table 1. Four Role Theories and Their Alignment with Orientations toward Self and Identity

Where might Goffman's work fit within this nexus of orientations toward role, self, and identity? Although observers such as Verhoeven (1985) suggest it is fruitless to pigeonhole Goffman as belonging to a particular theoretical perspective, it appears that Goffman is most strongly linked with the social structural and situational orientations (see Callero 1994, p. 229, for a discussion of the convergence of these two perspectives on the primacy of structural positions in the development of roles). For example, Goffman was not all that concerned with the subjectivity of actors as they negotiate definitions of the situation in face-to-face settings. Although social performances are shot through with actors' assumptions of the perceived moral universe, insofar as they are concerned with cutting types of figures perceived to embody notions of the "well-demeaned individual" before particular audiences, oftentimes this morality to which Goffman refers appears to be in the first instance institutionally defined (Rawls 1987, p. 143).

The Importance of the Negational Self

Although Goffman never employed the term "negational self" to refer to the self in interaction, his work nevertheless strongly hints at its importance. Perhaps the most consistent focus on something that could be called a negational self is found in Goffman's *Frame Analysis*. When discussing the human being, Goffman notes that most persons in their everyday lives readily draw inferences about what persons are presumably really like from their "anchored doings," that is, from their mundane activities which can be witnessed by any co-present others. A person's actions, utterances, mannerisms, gestures, and appearance as he or she is doing something — that is, playing a role — before a group of others in a social setting are said to contribute to an ongoing record of that person's identity. Goffman warns, however, that lay notions concerning the wholeness and authenticity of actors' performances in roles can take us only so far. As Goffman (1974, p. 294) states, "Behind current role, the person himself will peek out. Indeed, this is a common way of framing our perception of another. So three cheers for the self. Now let us try to reduce the clatter."

Within any strip of activity a person may "peek out," which suggests that even though lay observers may feel comfortable assigning some stable sense of self to the person, social scientists like Goffman are much more squeamish about it. There is really not much there, or rather, there is not much warrant to make such strong inferences about selfhood knowing, as Goffman does, how adept persons are at staging whatever version of self is called for within face-to-face interaction. Although much information can be gleaned from persons within face-to-face interaction, there is no way of knowing, really, whether what is witnessed in terms of self- or team-presentations can be connected to underlying truths about the selves being observed. Goffman (1974, p. 508) goes so far as to suggest that, rather than providing information to others in interaction, what we are really doing is putting on shows.

By putting on shows in this way, through our presentation of self on the front stage, we are playing a character that meets the situational needs of the social gathering. The assumption of what sort of figure ought to be struck before a group of others is the assumption of the lead character, of the person who has the floor at any particular moment. Everyone is playing parts on a stage, but it is a free secret, in that no one is willing to admit it, yet everyone knows what the game is. Everyone's play acting, then, is tolerated and even expected, and we provide latitude for these little scenes because to not do so would show us to be faulty interactants who thereby cannot be accorded full status as fellow participants in the setting because we can't even get this little thing right. The ultimate endpoint of all of this is that for the most part actors busily frame their "true" selves from view, as they go about putting on one-person shows for the benefit of the audience (Goffman 1974, p. 547).

Other Literature Concerning the Negational Self

As we have seen, Goffman notes that both the lay public and certain traditions within social psychology have given the self too much credit, that is, by assuming that the performances actors put on point toward wholeness and authenticity regarding the claims of selfhood or identity being made. One such tradition within the scholarly literature is Manford Kuhn's so-called Twenty Statements Test. Kuhn and McPartland (1954) instructed undergraduate student test subjects to ask themselves "Who Am I?" and to jot down their responses on a sheet of paper. The responses generally fell into two broad categories. One of the categories consisted of "consensual" self-attitudes, for example, identifying oneself as mother, student, worker, or athlete. These are consensual self-attitudes because they refer to broadly agreed upon categories of persons, or "statuses" as that term is used by sociologists. A second category of responses were labeled "subconsensual," and these are more abstract characterizations of self, such as the respondent describing him- or herself as "happy," "easy to get along with," or "pretty good" at doing something (playing baseball, carpentry work, fishing, and so forth). Generally people list the consensual categories first, then start listing a range of subconsensual categories that purport to characterize the self in some way.

Psychologist William McGuire (1984) has criticized Kuhn and others who ask respondents to react to the question "Who am I?" in this manner. This approach is limited because it yields only an affirmative self-concept, namely, what people think they are or what they believe they are good at. McGuire (1984, p. 99) argues that what has been overlooked in these studies is the "negation self-concept," which can be derived simply by asking respondents "Tell us what you are *not*." This approach led McGuire to develop distinctiveness theory, which argues that persons' perceptions of how they differ from others in certain situations are at least as important as their own affirmative self-perceptions. In other words, given certain conditions persons will find their perceived differences from others to be most salient, and hence the negation self-concept is sometimes a more robust predictor of attitudes or actions than the affirmative self-concept. For example, in schools with a majority white population, white students were not very likely to mention affirmatively their race on the "Tell us about yourself" prompt. However, when asked to respond to "Tell us what you are not," race became highly salient for these white students. In other words, in this social situation white students were more likely to report not having a minority ethnicity (in response to "tell us what you are not") than they were to report having a majority ethnicity (in response to "tell us about yourself"; see McGuire and McGuire (1987, pp. 140-141).

This version of the negational self, informed by McGuire's work in psychology, finds a parallel in sociologist George McCall's (2003) notion of the "Not-Me." Similar to McGuire, McCall argues that there are both positive and negative poles of identity.

Following from both Goffman and Gregory Stone (1962), McCall (2003, p. 12) points out that "identifying with one social object often entails *dis*identifying with other social objects that differ from that one." This suggests that normal processes of both self-identification and self-disidentification are at work in social interaction. McCall came up with a "What Am I NOT?" test to explore aspects of self-disidentification. This resulted in respondents producing a series of "I am not..." statements, which taken together constitute the Not-Me. What McCall discovered is that persons may engage either in *proactive* identity work—for example, assertions of self in situations through self-presentation or support seeking—or *reactive* identity work, which occurs primarily in situations where others impute to a person an identity that that person had excluded from his or her self-concept. This means that, more often than not, the Not-Me will come into view as a result of reactive identity work (McCall 2003, p. 20).

Although the work of McGuire and McCall leads us toward the negational self, by combining Goffman's own identity typology with other systems of thought that are often thought to be antithetical to Goffman—such as the grand theories of Talcott Parsons and Jürgen Habermas—we are in a position to understand more precisely both the social structural and social psychological conditions that give rise to the negational self. In the next section we will briefly examine Goffman's tripartite identity typology.

Goffman's Identity Typology

Goffman (1963) argues there are three distinct types of identities, namely personal identity, social identity, and ego (or felt) identity. By *personal identity*, Goffman is referring to the special or peculiar characteristics an individual possesses which make him or her truly unique.[2] This is the idea that nobody can walk in another person's shoes, meaning that no two persons share the exact same socialization experiences, or hang out with the exact same group of persons, or hold the same ideas about the world and the people around them. In everyday life we learn to peg individuals as being a certain type of person, and further characterizations about persons are made with regard to their biographies, their work, their interpersonal demeanor, and so forth. The sum total of all this information leads persons to impute a relatively stable personal identity to themselves and to others to the extent that persons embody the convergence of all these social, cultural, personal, and biographical elements, uniquely configured in every case.

Although personal identity, on the one hand, and ego or felt identity (to be discussed below), on the other, are often conflated or equated in the literature, the main distinction between the two is that at its core personal identity is composed of the

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[2] Compare Thomas Luckmann's (1979, p. 60) take on personal identity: "This form of life, i.e. the human level of behavioral integration, is most aptly described by the concept of personal identity. Personal identity refers to *central long-range control of its behavior by an individual organism*." This notion of the controlling aspect of identity is compatible with Parsons' (1968) conceptualization of identity.

particular value structures of reference groups and other social actors with whom the person interacts (Hitlin 2003). Ego identity possesses no such particularistic value structure at its core (as we shall see). And further, this objectification of self is often felt by the person as somehow an inauthentic representation of who that person "really is," which thereby prompts the person to develop a self in opposition to the stigmatized or objectified self represented in the value system of fellow interactants. This is clearly one aspect of the negational self.

On the other hand, when the value judgments made by others are in alignment with, and are accepted more or less nonproblematically as a true or authentic representation of one's self, then we may speak of *social identity*. This second understanding of identity that Goffman develops refers to the supraindividual level of societal reality, namely, the notion that persons have available to them general or broad cultural criteria by which they categorize themselves and other persons as this or that type of person.

The third type of identity Goffman distinguishes is *ego* (or *felt*) *identity*. Although somewhat close to personal identity, ego identity is not necessarily avowed by the person or ascribed by a collectivity (as in the case of social identity), but is felt by persons as one of the more intimate subjective moments answering to the question "Who am I?" With ego identity, a person takes liberties to fashion whatever identity is seen by him or her as most relevant or suitable in a given situation. As Robin Williams (2000, p. 7) explains, the central characteristic of ego identity is

> ...the capacity of individuals to choose amongst a set of available attributes, and a concern with the coherence and consistency discernible within the variety of chacterisations accepted by individuals to be true of themselves independent of time and location.

Although Goffman was a sociological social psychologist, he was also a structuralist and microfunctionalist (Chriss 2003). Embedded within his understanding of self and identity were structural elements which he tended to underplay. Ironically, it is the negational self aspects of Goffman's structural social psychology that are retrievable with the help of macro theorists such as Parsons and Habermas. This will be developed in the next few sections.

Bringing in Parsons and Habermas

Whereas Goffman focused his research and theorizing at the micro-level of face-to-face interaction, Talcott Parsons worked at much higher levels of theoretical abstraction and generality. Yet, as he was attempting to keep the social system in view in its totality, Parsons believed that he could explain anything within the system, including such "micro" phenomena as identity, the self, and social interaction. For example, Parsons (1968) fashioned a conceptualization of identity out of the far-reaching changes and structural strains evident in the social systems of the West. Specifically, Parsons saw the proliferation of such terms as "identity" and "alienation" in usage within both

intellectual and lay communities as symptomatic of broader structural changes in society. Parsons (1968, p. 11) explains that this change in the cultural definition of the situation

> ...is in part a consequence of the increasingly elaborate structural differentiation of the society, which produces increasing pluralization of the role-involvements of the typical individual. This means both an often bewildering range of possible choices and complex cross-pressures once commitments have been made.

Authors have written about such things as the "crisis of identity" (Bendle 2002) and the profusion of individual roles and identities in the postwar period (Frank and Meyer 2002; Orrange 2003). Castells (1997) links the growth in concerns with identity in the postmodern era to the rise of the Information Age. The Information Age corresponds with the increasing globalization brought about by continuing refinements and advancements in communication technologies (such as the Internet) that have produced a globalized "network society" characterized by the demise of statism. Within this confluence of historical change and flux of local and global social environments many of us are examining and re-examining our identities, whether at the private or collective levels (Howarth 2002, p. 145). A number of authors have argued that there are many forces pulling selves in different directions; in effect, there are too many messages about who we are or what we should be (see, e.g., Gergen 1991; Holstein and Gubrium 2000).

Whereas in the past persons received their identities or senses of self from their deep and abiding embeddedness in primary groups—particularly the family (see Kellerhals et al. 2002) — the modern or postmodern decentered subject is now free to explore an ever-expanding range of possibilities with regard to self (Harré 1991; Orrange 2003). For example, the waning of the traditional extended, patriarchal family system and the rise of the smaller, nuclear family means that women now garner more education than ever before, and are better able to challenge paternal authority (Chriss 1999b; Gouldner 1979). The patriarchal identification of woman with "mother" or "housewife" is rendered illegitimate with the rise of universal notions of personhood and the empowerment of the sovereign individual to decide these things for him- or herself (Frank and Meyer 2002, p. 92).

With the number of role-identities or selves seemingly proliferating, modern persons may now be characterized as engaging in "identity shopping" (Halter 2000; Markowitz 1997; compare Giddens 1991; James 1890). Those who take structure and structural constraints seriously, such as for example Goffman and Parsons, are correct in noting that there are limits to how far persons or groups can go in legitimately claiming identities for themselves or for the collectivities to which they belong. This is why it is important to understand how the identity typology of Goffman aligns with the three analytical worlds—subjective, objective, and social—as formulated by both Parsons (1951) and Habermas (1984, 1987), and which correspond as well to the three types of identity

which Goffman developed. In the remaining sections I will explain how the elements of Goffman's identity typology and, by extension, the negational self, fit into the three-world schema.

Recapitulation

Our discussion to this point implies three broad types of identity processes. The first describes the situation in which persons are apt to acquiesce to—perhaps even accept or embrace—a particular social identity in a more or less nonproblematic way. Here, organizational or broader cultural scripts are invoked around which a general consensus is forged among participants about the nature of selves in interaction. Here, "normal appearances" are more or less managed and maintained (Goffman 1971). This aligns analytically with Goffman's social identity because of the way social consensus forges identity in these instances.

A second situation is one in which a person resists, either openly or more furtively or surreptitiously, a particular identity that is being called for or demanded of him or her in particular circumstances. This applies to the case of the broken narratives of inmate, colonial, or stigmatized populations more generally. Here, a search is launched for the authentic self in opposition to the alienated or stigmatized virtual self that is being foisted upon persons or groups in terms of collective identity (Appiah 1994). The negational self implies a rejected or stigmatized identity. Likewise stigmatized identity aligns with Goffman's notion of personal identity for reasons that will be elucidated briefly below.

A third situation typifies the condition of postmodern decentered subjects who have a variety of options from which to pick and choose in forging identities and senses of self. Indeed, in the postmodern condition persons have the opportunity to engage in "reselfing," namely the transformation and recreation of the self (Wexler 1998; see Martin 2002 for an analysis of reselfing by persons within Overeaters Anonymous and other such organizations). In these instances, Goffman ego identity can be found to be consistent on some levels with the notion of "identity shopping" (Halter 2000; Markowitz 1997).

The egalitarian environment of postmodern culture allows for the opening up of possibilities with regard to identity and self-presentation, as many of the traditional ways of understanding what is expected of self and others has fallen into disrepair. For all intents and purposes this began with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, specifically with regard to the decline of serf labor and the hollowing out of *noblesse oblige* as a moral mandate for behavior based upon status. Although the modern condition by no means allows for complete openness with regard to the range of possibilities regarding personal or group expression of identity — there are, after all, still fairly rigid expectations for behavior based on gender, social class, occupation,

race and ethnicity, kinship, and so forth — it is certainly more flexible and open to negotiation than ever before in recorded human history. The negational self specifically finds no purchase here.

On the other hand, the negational self gains strength in the form of identity shopping as described above. Although more dynamic and negotiable today than ever before, identity shopping is nevertheless constrained by a prevailing cultural heritage proscribing and prescribing possibilities for the presentation of self. In other words, although identity shopping has become more prominent within postmodern society, it does not exhaust understandings of self and identity as made clear by the other types of identity discussed here. In order to understand the linkages between these various forms of identity, we must take note briefly of how the ideas of Goffman and Parsons converge on the conceptualization of self and identity.

Parsons, Goffman, and Three Analytical Worlds

Utilizing Parsons' AGIL schema, I shall now attempt to systematize the identity typology that so far has been presented. I follow Parsons (1951, 1996) and Habermas (1984, 1987) in conceiving of three analytical worlds with regard to social scientific explanation of human social life. Parsons (1996, p. 23) held that "...there is no reason to make any radical distinction in kind between habits of thought and technological habits. We are one organism, not two, and viewed from one angle we are physical, from another mental, from another moral." This distinction corresponds with a classification of analytical worlds made famous by Habermas (1984, 1987), insofar as one may speak, respectively, of an *objective* world (where the validity claim of propositional truth holds), a *subjective* world (associated with the validity claim of subjective truthfulness), and a *social* world (where issues of normative rightness apply) (Chriss 1995, 1996).[3]

Here, Habermas, drawing on Parsons, explicitly is attempting to escape the standard subject-object dyad or dichotomy by moving toward the triadic structure of subject-object-social. Parsons, drawing from Mead and the symbolic interactionists, had earlier developed the notion of double contingency, namely, the idea that in interaction persons must take into account the perspective of others as well as their own perceptions of these others (and themselves) in order for interaction to proceed smoothly. In other words, in most routine face-to-face settings persons are both subject and object to each other simultaneously (Parsons 1977). Habermas's triadic structure, which Strydom (2001) identifies as "triple contingency," moves beyond the

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[3] It is important to note that even though Habermas was influenced by an incipient notion of a three-world model evident in the writings of the young Parsons, Parsons was by no means the first person to conceptualize this. Before Parsons was even born Franklin Giddings (1899, p. 10) wrote that "Every human being is at once an animal, a conscious individual mind, and a socius. As an animal he is studied by the anatomist and physiologist; as a conscious mind he is studied by the psychologist; as a socius, loving and seeking acquaintance, forming friendships and alliances with other socii like himself, imitating them and setting examples for them, teaching them and learning from them, and engaging with them in many forms of common activity,—he is studied by the sociologist." Among sociologists, Giddings should receive proper credit for being the innovator of this three-world concept.

dyad of subject-object or speaker-hearer to the triad of speaker-hearer-observer. As Strydom (2001, p. 174) explains,

> …in addition to the perspectives of speaker and hearer, another perspective comes into play in the development beyond the double contingency relation. This is the perspective of the observer. …The first person who is speaking and the second person who is addressed and responds shows up against the background of the uninvolved third person.

In other words, the formulation by Habermas attempts to take into account not only the situation of Ego and Alter as they interact in face-to-face settings, but also the social environment within which such interactions occur. In this sense, Habermas's notion of triple contingency at the macro level is consistent with Norbert Wiley's (1994) notion of the triadic structure of the self residing at the micro level, namely the self understood as I-You-Me (going beyond Mead's dyadic subject of I-Me).
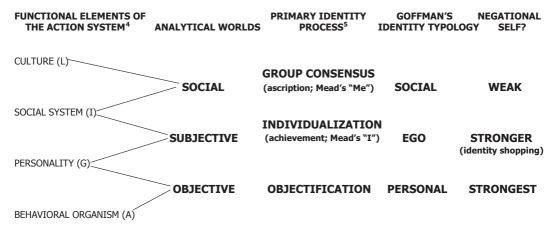
FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE ACTION SYSTEM[4]	ANALYTICAL WORLDS	PRIMARY IDENTITY PROCESS[5]	GOFFMAN'S IDENTITY TYPOLOGY	NEGATIONAL SELF?
CULTURE (L)				
	SOCIAL	GROUP CONSENSUS (ascription; Mead's "Me")	SOCIAL	WEAK
SOCIAL SYSTEM (I)				
	SUBJECTIVE	INDIVIDUALIZATION (achievement; Mead's "I")	EGO	STRONGER (identity shopping)
PERSONALITY (G)				
	OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIFICATION	PERSONAL	STRONGEST
BEHAVIORAL ORGANISM (A)				

Figure 1. Analytical Worlds and Identity

As depicted in Figure 1, the three analytical worlds — objective, social, and subjective — lay in the interstices between the four functions of the action system, as developed by Parsons and Platt (1973). Consistent with the AGIL schema, at the level of the action system the behavioral organism fulfills the adaptation function, the personality the goal-attainment function, the social system the integrative function,

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[4] The functional elements of the action system — culture, social system, personality, and behavioral organism — are related cybernetically according to the dictum "things high in information control things high in energy." Culture sits atop the cybernetic hierarchy insofar as it is highest in information, while the behavioral organism sits at the lower end analytically since it is lowest in information while highest in energy.

[5] The primary identity process aligning with the social world is group or social consensus forged around predominately ascriptive criteria (age, gender, race, social class). For the subjective world, the primary process is individualization, as persons in postconventional society are freed somewhat from the dictates of status where criteria of achievement override ascription in many areas of life (but not all). The negational self gains a foothold here, and shows up explicitly for example in the form of identity shopping. For the objective world, the primary process is objectification as in Hegel's notion of the master-bondsman dialectic, and it is here that the negational self fully flowers.

and culture the latent pattern maintenance function. As seen in Figure 1, the functional elements of the action system are arranged according to the cybernetic hierarchy of control, whereby things high in information "control" things high in energy. This means that the cybernetic hierarchy of functional elements is always in the direction of L-I-G-A. Hence, culture, which is high in information, sits at the pinnacle of the cybernetic hierarchy as it is high in information relative to the next subsystem down, namely the social system. The social system is in turn higher in information than the personality system, while in turn the personality system is higher in information than the behavioral system (or organism). Finally, in turn, the behavioral system is lowest in information but highest in energy. With regard to interpreting the three analytical worlds and their interrelation, we may say that the social world is the highest in information among the three worlds, bounded above by the cultural subsystem and below by the social system, then similarly for the subjective and objective worlds which are bounded above and below as depicted in Figure 1.

Goffman's three identities — social, ego, and personal — can be located within appropriate analytical worlds as depicted in the figure. Goffman's personal identity (or stigmatized identity) aligns with the objective world insofar as this particular form of identity arises most prominently through a process of objectification whereby persons develop identities by first becoming objects of others' scorn and/or scrutiny. The negational self thrives here. Goffman's notion of ego identity aligns with identity shopping (both of which are connected to the subjective analytical world) insofar as here individuals are choosing from among a set of available attributes — shopping for identity in other words — concerning who they are independent of time, location, and other cultural and social factors (Williams 2000). Indeed, the notions of identity shopping and narrative identity[6] agree as well with Habermas' (1987, p. 106) discussion of, respectively, the distinction Mead makes (1934) between the "I" (ego identity) and the "Me" (role identity):

> At the level of role-identity a person understands himself in such a way that he answers the question, what kind of person he is (has become), what character he has (has acquired) by means of ascribed predicates. At the level of ego-identity a person understands himself in a different way, namely, by answering the question, who or what kind of person he *wants* to be.

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[6] For narrative identity I draw primarily from Ezzy (1998), who combines the hermeneutics of Paul Ricouer's identity theory with Mead's conception of the temporal and intersubjective nature of the self. Ezzy agrees with Ricouer (1992) in placing somewhat more emphasis than Mead (1934) does on temporality to the extent that, although the self arises through a reflective process as persons take into account their own and others' attitudes toward them, this process takes place over time, over the course of which persons engage in the narrative construction of identity (but cf. Daly 2002; Flaherty 2002, 2003). As Ezzy (1998, p. 245) states, "Narratives are integrally temporal because they configure the events of the past, present, and future into a narrative whole." From this perspective, selves are constructed through storytelling (see, e.g., Broad 2002; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Loseke 2007; Mason 2004; Randall 1995; Wiley 1994).

Following the logic of the cybernetic hierarchy of control, even within post-conventional society the fairly "conventional" process of narrative identity still holds sway (insofar as it is highest in "information" in relation to the other two types of identity), as social consensus remains a powerful force in regulating interpersonal relations and notions of self and identity. There is a limit to understanding and explaining identity in individualistic or subjectivist terms, as explained by Mason (2004, p. 177): "People's identities and practices are embedded in sets of relationships that do not fit neatly into and cannot be envisioned through these [subjectivist or individualist] frames." Even so, we would expect that identity shopping will continue to gain momentum as an important process in identity formation for the foreseeable future, especially as equity concerns continue to fuel and in turn inform legal, cultural, and social spheres (Elliott 2007; for the classical statement on equity, see Maine 1963 [1861]).

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