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## CHAPTER 8

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# Communication and the Self

## Learning Objectives

*After reading this chapter, you should be able to:*

- Identify the four quadrants of the Johari Window and explain the meaning of each.
- Describe an improved Johari window.
- List common principles of self-disclosure in our society.
- Define what Goffman meant by the terms dramatic realization, performance disruptions, dramaturgical loyalty, dramaturgical discipline, and dramaturgical circumspection.
- Define and give examples of: identity negotiation, working consensus, surface acting, deep acting, and family paradigms.
- Discuss whether working consensus is a public or a private reality.
- Describe what is meant by “feeling norms” and discuss how they are formed.
- Describe how institutions accomplish emotion management.
- Discuss how communication constructs gender.
- Reflect upon your beliefs concerning the role of intrapersonal communication in determining your choices and successes.

## Introduction

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Our final chapter focuses on “the self”—how we view ourselves, and how that influences our communication with others. As we said in the start, this presentation schema runs counter to the approach of other introductory texts; most early on, write about “the self.” Why do we diverge from the traditional approach and save “the self,” for last? Because, despite society’s focus on the importance of “our own” personal communication (e.g., personal e-mail account, blog, cell phone number, and facebook.com site) communication, as we envision it, is not “all about me.” Our perceptions and communication products are immeasurably shaped and influenced by multiple external factors. These include: the larger physical environment, our biology, culture, family, and peers. Indeed, these influences begin long before conception. With that in mind, let us now consider “the self,” and how an individual’s communication interacts with these influences.

## Communication: A Basic Life Process

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Communication is central to each of our lives because it functions as a basic life process:

“Just as animal and human systems take in oxygen and foodstuffs and transform them into materials necessary to their functioning, they also take in and use information. In the most basic sense, communication is the essential life process through which animal and human systems create, acquire, transform and use information to carry out the activities of their lives” (Ruben, p. 65).

These concepts are contained in the Systems Theory of communication. This theory is useful in clarifying the nature of communication and its fundamental relationship to behavior. A system is defined as “any entity or whole that is composed of interdependent parts.” By definition, a system possesses characteristics and capabilities that are distinct from those of its separate parts. An example of a system is a pizza, which, while composed of flour, yeast, water, tomato sauce, and cheese, is far different in appearance, consistency, and taste than any of its component ingredients. Systems can also be living, taking the form of plants, animals, and humans.

As we progress up the scale of life from plants to animals to humans, it becomes clear that the nature of the relationships between the “system” and the environment becomes more and more complex. The very survival of animals depends upon their ability to acquire and use information to accomplish nearly all of life’s activities, including courtship and mating, food location, and self-defense.

Communication is particularly critical to the survival of humans, as we are among those animals whose survival directly depends upon our relationships with nurturing adults. Consider, for example, the newly born infant whose main existence is comprised of sleeping, eating, waste elimination, and crying. Babies are unable to engage in locomotion, food gathering, or self-defense. Without a nurturing adult, the baby would not survive. Yet, babies are generally competent in communicating their needs via crying, which serves to alert the caretaker to feed, cuddle, burp, clean, or rock the tot to sleep. Just about the time a caretaker become fatigued and discouraged with the nurturing process, (around six weeks of age), the baby “rewards” the adult with “a smile.” And, sometime between nine and twelve months of age, typically developing babies will produce a “first word,” often “mama” or “dada.” This represents another tremendously rewarding event for the caretaker.

A second collection of theories that explains why communication is central to our lives is Need Theories. These theories are based upon the premise that as a human being grows and matures, so does the range of needs that must be met for the individual to develop into a physically and emotionally healthy person. Perhaps the best-known theory of human needs was developed by Abraham Maslow from his observations of personality development (Maslow, 1970).

Maslow theorized that humans have five different types of needs, and that these exist in a hierarchical arrangement. According to Maslow, the needs are activated in a specific order, so that a higher order need cannot be realized until the next-lower need has been fulfilled. Maslow’s hierarchy follows, presented from the highest order need, to the lowest order need:

*Self-Actualization Need*—The need to fulfill one’s highest potential in life.

*Esteem Need*—The need to be valued and appreciated by others. This includes pride, self-esteem, and prestige.

*Social Need*—The need to have love, companionship, and a feeling of belongingness to one or more groups.

*Safety Need*—The need to be free from harm and fear. In a society, this would translate into having a job and financial security, and living and working in a safe neighborhood.

*Physiological Need*—This need relates to the satisfaction of one's biological requirements for air, food, water, sleep, sex, and protective clothing and shelter (Hamilton and Parker, 1970).

It is important to remember that every “theory” must be tested, and Maslow's is no exception. Maslow's theory has failed to gain total acceptance because of evidence that the needs he identified do not have to be activated in a specific order. In addition, some theorists do not accept that there are as many, or few as, five needs.

An alternative theory has been proposed by Clayton Alderfer (1969). His ERG theory, specifies only three needs:

1. *Existence Needs* (correspond to Maslow's Physiological Needs)
2. *Relatedness Needs* (correspond to Maslow's Social Needs)
3. *Growth Needs* (correspond to Maslow's Self-Actualization and Esteem needs)

It might be said that Alderfer's ERG theory and Maslow's Need theory are similar, despite differing classifications of needs. However, there is one major difference between the two theories. While activation of needs follows a strict hierarchical sequence in Maslow's schema, ERG theory specifies that needs are not necessarily activated in a specific order (Baron, 1986).

It is evident that communication is primary to the satisfaction each of the identified human needs, whether they are as “concrete” as the need to obtain food via a trip to the grocery store, or as “abstract” as the achievement of self-actualization via enrollment in an institution of higher education.

## The Johari Window

One of the most interesting models of interpersonal communication, the Johari Window, was developed by two psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (Luft, 1969). The Johari Window is traditionally included in introductory communication and psychology courses to illustrate concepts of self-awareness and self-disclosure. It is included in this particular chapter to illustrate the multiple realities that are constructed by communication with others and ourselves.

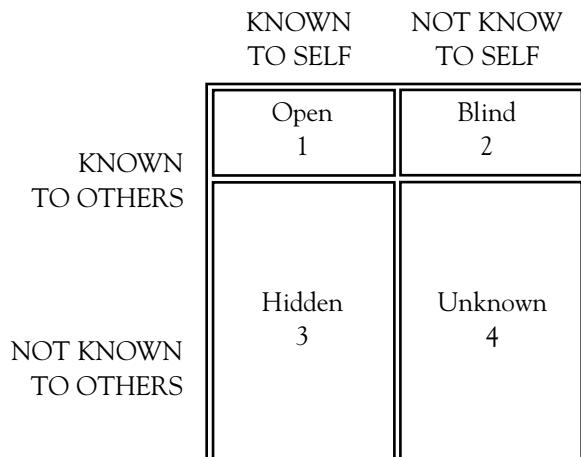


Figure 1 An example of a Johari window for a shy, withdrawn individual.

The Johari Window consists of four quadrants, as seen in Figure 1. The open quadrant represents information about a person that is available both to themselves and to others. For example, both you and I know that you, a reader of this textbook, are likely to be a student, or are somehow interested in the conduct of communication studies.

The blind quadrant includes information that someone knows about another person, but they themselves do not know. Information of this sort might be that a person is unaware they have a terrible singing voice, or that they tell bad jokes.

The hidden quadrant consists of knowledge that we have about ourselves, but do not disclose to most others, such as our medical conditions, sexual history, and salary.

The unknown quadrant contains information about a person that is not known by others nor by the person. This would include undiagnosed medical or psychological conditions, unknown skills or abilities, and one's ultimate requirements to achieve self-actualization.

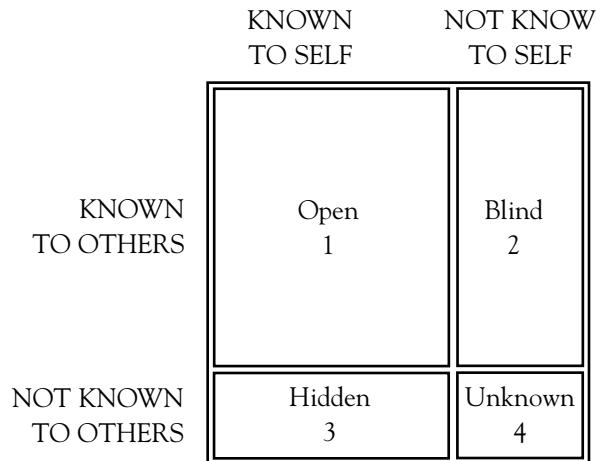


Figure 2 An improved Johari window.

The Johari Window is thus composed of four sometimes conflicting, sometimes congruent personal realities. The Johari Window is not, however, a static entity. Communication with ourselves and with others can change the relative relationships of the four windows, as shown in Figure 2, an improved Johari Window (Tubbs and Moss, 1994). In this altered version of the window, the individual has achieved greater self-knowledge. More about this person is known to others than in the first Johari Window. However, it could be argued that increasing the open quadrant is not always desirable, especially if there are things about ourselves that would be damaging for others to know. Moreover, self-awareness of some types of knowledge might be upsetting and counterproductive.

Through the communication of self-disclosure, we create new realities for ourselves and for others. In our society, there are implicit rules for self-disclosure, such as:

Rule: Self-disclosure should occur in a gradual manner, with more intimacy occurring as the relationship progresses.

Rule: Self-disclosure, unless it is with a trusted therapist, should occur in a reciprocal fashion between two people.

Rule: Self-disclosure about how one feels about the other should not be delivered in a cruel or a damaging fashion.

Rule: Self-disclosure should not be engaged in if it places one in a vulnerable or unsafe position.

Rule: Disclosure about another's unknown quadrant should occur in the spirit of ethical communication.

Thus, the construct of the Johari window shows how we may project multiple identities or realities, and that these might differ depending upon the intended audience.

## Impression Management and Identity Negotiation

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Erving Goffman, in his 1959 classic book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, likens our everyday communication to dramaturgy, or “performances” in which we practice impression management and control the images that others receive about us. Relating this to the Johari Window model, we manipulate the nature and size of our *open quadrant*. In fact, the size and information contained in the open quadrant will vary according to our audience, and what we feel is important for them to know about us. When, for example, we wish for others to become aware of previously unknown facts about us, Goffman believes that we engage in *dramatic realization*. This is accomplished by highlighting selected information, (e.g., “I really like to ski”), thus changing the way others view us. Charles Horton Cooley, (1994) makes the point that while children and adults both engage in *impression formation*, the adult attempts to do so less directly:

“A child obviously and simply, at first, does things for effect. Later there is an endeavor to suppress the appearance of doing so: affection, indifference, contempt, etc., are simulated to hide the real wish to affect the self-image. It is perceived that an obvious seeking after good opinion is weak and disagreeable.”

Whether we are children or adults, our personal realities evolve as a result of our communication with others. In fact, our behavior and status in a communicative encounter is most often arrived at as a result of subtle negotiation. For example, when first meeting someone, mutually arrived at decisions are made as to how the interaction will progress. Will the interaction be social, or business-like? Will one communicative partner attempt to diminish the status of another? Who is allowed to interrupt the other? *Identity negotiation* is the process by which two people negotiate and agree upon the identities that each will assume in an interaction. Though this may be done either implicitly or explicitly, skilled communicators attempt to do so in an understanding, non-confrontational way.

When the two actors in a communicative scene finally arrive at this understanding, it can be said that they have reached a *working consensus*. Kollock and O'Brien (1994) point out that though this public agreement may not reflect the private reality as to how communicators really feel about each other, it is the public reality that guides us in our interactions. Thus, though we may personally dislike a particular coworker, we allow our working consensus to guide our interactions.

## Feeling Management

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Previously, we examined how members of a society must learn a *hidden curriculum*, a concept introduced by Gerbner (1974) to designate the very broad body of information that humans must learn about behaving in their culture. Gerbner defines it as “a lesson plan that no one teaches,

but everyone learns" (p. 476). The hidden curriculum includes both implicit and explicit communication rules. These suggest how we should behave in a variety of communication contexts, (e.g., how we should relate to others in our family; how we should behave during a classroom lecture). The curriculum is considered to be "hidden" because this immense and ever-changing body of knowledge is not contained within any one available format. Instead, the content is transmitted to the children and adults of our culture via verbal, non-verbal and paralinguistic communication, and emerges over their lifetimes.

Could it be that the hidden curriculum also includes lessons as to how we should *feel* about ourselves, others, events, and institutions? Research by Simon and colleagues (1994) suggests that societal communication also guides the development of feeling norms. These authors engaged in biweekly observations and conducted in-depth interviews of a total of ten peer groups in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade—primarily white females in a middle school cafeteria setting. The researchers discovered that heterosexual adolescent girls hold norms that dictate whether (or not) to love, whom to love, and the extent to which one should love. The norms that emerged are as follows:

- Norm 1: Romantic relationships should be important, but not everything in life.
- Norm 2: One should have romantic feelings only for someone of the opposite sex.
- Norm 3: One should not have romantic feelings for a boy who is already attached.
- Norm 4: One should have romantic feelings for only one boy at a time.
- Norm 5: One should always be in love.

Simon and colleagues also described a variety of discourse strategies used by adolescent girls to communicate the norms to their friends, and then, to reinforce the norms. Common discourse strategies included humor (i.e., joking and teasing), gossip and confrontation.

The process of emotional or affective socialization described by Simon and colleagues (1992) begins much before adolescence, even in infancy, as babies are encouraged to kiss the baby doll and to "make nice" to the family pet, whereas their older siblings are told that they must "love" the new intruder into their family unit.

## Acting Techniques

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A substantial part of our daily communication incorporates acting. Hochschild (1994) describes this as follows:

"We all do a certain amount of acting. We may act in two ways. In the first way, we try to change how we outwardly appear. As it is for the people observed by Erving Goffman, the action is in the body language, the put-on sneer, the posed shrug, the controlled sigh. This is *surface acting*. The other way is *deep acting*. Here, display is a natural result of working on feeling; the actor does not try to seem happy or sad but rather expresses spontaneously, as the Russian director Constantin Stanislavski urged, a *real feeling* that has been self-induced."

"In our daily lives, offstage as it were, we also develop feeling for the parts we play; and along with the workday props of the kitchen table, or office restroom mirror, we also use deep acting, emotion memory, and the sense of 'as if this were true' in the course of trying to feel what we sense we ought to feel or want."

Hochschild notes that acting also occurs in institutions:

“something more operates when institutions are involved, for within institutions various elements of acting are taken away from the individual and replaced by institutional mechanisms. The locus of acting, of *emotion management*, moves up to the level of the institution.”

He further explains:

“Officials in institutions believe they have done things right when they have established illusions that foster the desired feelings in workers, when they have placed parameters around a worker’s emotion memories.”

Institutions use various means to accomplish what Hochschild suggests. They require adherence to a policies and procedures manual, and the company’s mission statement. Quality assurance programs, and corporate-wide training promotes the treatment of customers and fellow employees alike as “valued customers.” As examples, in the early 1990s, the Pontiac Division of General Motors, Inc. trained employees at every level of the organization to work together to satisfy the customer with enthusiasm (note the prescribed emotional state). Gap Inc.’s website (2007) states that “the work is fun,” “we work hard,” and “we thrive on a spirit of exploration, creativity, excellence, and teamwork in everything we do.” Starbucks (2007) even extends the desired feeling management to its customers, striving to “develop enthusiastically satisfied customers all of the time.”

Institutions that engage in military training, medical education, legal education and clinical psychological training may also be quite explicit in “directing” their employees’ emotional management. Such training often exposes employees to the finer points of deep and surface acting as it applies to their future professional conduct.

## Performance Disruptions

Try as we may to produce a communication performance that will project the desired impression to others, it is inevitable that disruptions will occur. Goffman (1995) describes various types of disruptions. These include “unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions, and faux pas,” that might result in anxiety or embarrassment.

Performance disruptions often occur in the presence of others and disrupt the situation, or “scene” within which one acts. Imagine a wedding where a jealous ex-lover walks into the chapel, witnesses the object of his affections in the process of marrying someone else, and brings the ceremony to a halt. This disruption would undoubtedly threaten the harmony of the situation and even go so far as to disrupt the “polite consensus” of a group. The wedding crasher could necessitate the creation a new “scene,” in which the original team (i.e., the guests at the party) splits into two or more teams (i.e., the brides, the grooms, and the intruder’s friends), each with a different interpretation of the disruption. We commonly hear reference to this in statements like, “what a scene!” or, “you really created quite a scene today!”

Performers and audiences alike protect the definition of the situation in the face of a potential or actual performance disruption. Goffman describes three key defensive attributes and practices:

### *Dramaturgical Loyalty*

Dramaturgical loyalty operates when members of a team (e.g., a family) protect the secrets of the team between communication “performances.” Goffman cites the examples of parents not discussing gossip in front of their children, lest the children betray the confidence to their friends.

In eighteenth century England, the “dumb-waiter,” was introduced. This was a large, multi-tiered table upon which food was placed so that guests could serve themselves without the assistance of servants. The dumb-waiter functioned as a *dramaturgical device* in that its presence helped to keep team secrets from employees.

Dramaturgical loyalty can be compromised if performers form excessively close ties with the audience, as in the case of a department store clerk who tells key customers the dates of upcoming sales that have not yet been publicized. Some retail establishments avoid these problems by routinely altering the clerks’ work schedule and locations so they do not become too well-acquainted with “the consumer audience.” Another technique is to make a concerted effort to develop high-group team solidarity so that “performers” will not seek an overly-familiar relationship with the audience. This is frequently legislated within organizations, such that supervisors are not allowed to become romantically involved with the individuals they supervise.

### *Dramaturgical Discipline*

The exercise of dramaturgical discipline requires that team members focus on their role in the team’s performance, but that they do not become so engrossed with their own performance that they fail to recognize when they must counteract the effects of potential disruptions. Parents with young children in the car on a long trip, for example, must be able to continue giving directions and driving the car safely, while ensuring that the children maintain decorum in the back seat.

The “disciplined performer” also knows their part and performs without committing faux pas or mistakes. They will be able to carry on despite mistakes made by other members of the team, and to immediately compensate for the mistakes to make them seem as if they were just be “part of the act.” The disciplined performer will accomplish all of this without the actor calling undue attention to the mistake or their assistance.

### *Dramaturgical Circumspection*

Actors must engage in dramaturgical circumspection. This means that they need to consciously and analytically consider how best to “stage the show.” This might involve strategic planning of their appearance as well as the timing, structure and content of a communication (e.g., “I’ll ask Dad for the car keys after dinner when he’s relaxed. I’ll start off by telling him about my good grades this semester.”).

Another result of dramaturgical circumspection may result in strategic selection of the audience, as in the case of jury selection.

Both audiences and performers employ protective practices so that the performance is not disrupted. The exercise of tact is an important protective mechanism, (e.g., clearing your throat to alert others to your presence). Sometimes staying away from a scene, (e.g., not attending a party where your presence would be awkward for others), or advising others to do so can also protect the performance.

When performance disruptions do occur, it is interesting to consider the nature of the disruption, and the responses of both the actor and the audience. Often, remedial strategies are employed to lessen the effect of an embarrassing incident. These might include: ignoring the disruption, taking action to “fix” the problem, use of humor, offering an apology, verbally justifying the disruption, expressing empathy to the embarrassed party or even fleeing the scene.

## The Reality of Our Identity

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Who am I? How do I view myself? Who are you? Oliver Sacks (1994) approaches these questions through the eyes of a patient with severe Korsakov's amnesia. The patient is not only unable to remember others, but cannot recall his own identity and history. Sacks points out that it is particularly disabling since each of us possesses a life history, a series of narratives, and that:

"If we wish to know about a man, we must ask, 'what is his life story—his real, inmost story?'—for each of us is a single narrative, which is constructed, continually, unconsciously, by, through and in us—through our perceptions, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions; and, not in the least, our discourse, our spoken narrations. Biologically, physiologically we are not so different from each other; historically, as narratives—we are each of us unique."

Imagine the confusion created by amnesia, or the disruption in personal identity caused by the need for an informant in the United States Witness Protection Program to shed a lifelong identity. Such scenarios would be devastating to one's sense of personal identity because the series of narratives that we tell ourselves, and others that are the keys to the reality of our identity, are either irretrievable or must be refabricated.

## Gender Identity

Before the birth of a baby, it is not uncommon for the parents to learn the sex of the infant. Indeed, some engage in practices that ensure the offspring's sex will match their preference. In many cases, the selected name, color of the baby clothes, and the hue of the nursery's walls reflect this knowledge.

We now ask you to read Heritage's (1984) chapter (largely based upon the work of Garfinkel), which presents a case study that illuminates how gender is constructed via our communication with self and others. The case describes 'Agnes'—a pseudonym for a male born with typically appearing male genitals. Until age 17, Agnes presented himself as a boy. However, by age 19, Agnes appeared "convincingly female," (p. 180) to all but her parents, relatives, medical staff, and ultimately, her boyfriend. Agnes sought and underwent surgery to change her sex from male to female. The reading describes how Agnes attempted to construct a new gender identity, and how much of this was achieved via her verbal and non-verbal communication.

## Maintaining Institutional Realities

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John Heritage

*For Kant the moral order ‘within’ was an awesome mystery; for sociologists the moral order ‘without’ is a technical mystery. A society’s members encounter and know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action—familiar scenes of everyday affairs, the world of daily life known in common with others and with others taken for granted.*

**Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology***

In the preceding chapters, we began to examine the consequences of viewing social action as fundamentally organized with respect to its reflexivity and accountability. A major finding of that examination was that the intersubjective intelligibility of actions ultimately rests on a symmetry between the production of actions on the one hand and their recognition on the other. This symmetry is one of *method* or *procedure* and Garfinkel forcefully recommends it when he proposes that

the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of ordinary everyday affairs are identical with members’ procedures for making those settings ‘accountable.’ (Garfinkel, 1967a: 1)

As we have seen, this symmetry of method is both assumed and achieved by the *actors* in settings of ordinary social activity. Its *assumption* permits actors to design their actions in relation to their circumstances so as to permit others, by methodically taking account of the circumstances, to recognize the action for what it is. The symmetry is also *achieved* and hence it is contingent. For the production and recognition of actions is dependent upon the parties supplying, and trusting one another to supply, an array of unstated assumptions so as to establish the recognizable sense of an action. A final conclusion to recall is that the production of an action will always reflexively re-determine (i.e. maintain, elaborate or alter) the circumstances in which it occurs.

We are now in a position to add a further ‘layer’ to the analysis of action—the layer of social institutions. For although we have deliberately ignored the fact until now, it will be obvious that, in maintaining, elaborating or transforming their circumstances by their actions, the actors are also simultaneously reproducing, developing or modifying the institutional realities which envelop those actions. In the present chapter, we shall be concerned with the phenomenon of institutional reality maintenance under a variety of circumstances ranging from overwhelming normative consensus to chronic structured conflict. The four case studies discussed in this chapter all focus on relatively diffuse institutional phenomena. The more recent ‘studies of work’ undertaken by Garfinkel and his students (Garfinkel, forthcoming) deal with a range of more concrete cases. We begin with Garfinkel’s famous discussion of ‘Agnes’ (Garfinkel, 1967e).

## Case 1: Agnes and the Institution of Gender

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‘Agnes’ is the pseudonym of a patient who was referred to the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1958. She was born a boy with normal appearing male genitals, certified and named appropriately and, until the age of 17, was generally recognized to be a boy (*ibid.* 120). Nonetheless, by the time she presented herself at UCLA at the age of 19,

Agnes’s appearance was convincingly female. She was tall, slim, with a very female shape. Her measurements were 38–25–38. She had long, fine dark-blond hair, a young face with pretty features, a peaches-and-cream complexion, no facial hair, subtly plucked eyebrows, and no make-up except for lipstick . . . Her usual manner of dress did not distinguish her from a typical girl of her age or class. There was nothing garish or exhibitionistic in her attire, nor was there any hint of poor taste or that she was ill at ease in her clothing . . . Her manner was appropriately feminine with a slight awkwardness that is typical of middle adolescence. (*ibid.* 119)

Agnes’s purpose in presenting herself at UCLA was to obtain a sex-change operation and, prior to this, she was examined by a number of specialists. The latter were interested in a range of her characteristics, including her unique endocrinological configuration (Schwabe et al., 1962), her psychological make-up, her gender identity, the causes of her desire to be made anatomically female and her psychiatric management (Stoller, Garfinkel and Rosen, 1960; 1962; Stoller, 1968; 1975). Garfinkel, however, used her case as an occasion to focus on the ways in which sexual identity is produced and managed as a ‘seen but unnoticed,’ but nonetheless institutionalized, feature of ordinary social interactions and institutional workings. He conducted the investigation with the use of tape-recorded conversations with Agnes in which the latter discussed her biography and prospects, triumphs and disasters and the hopes and fears associated with her self-imposed task of ‘passing’ for a woman. The result of this investigation was a profound analysis of gender considered as a produced institutional fact.

This last observation requires some additional comment. In studies of gender, it has been traditional to treat the conventional categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ as starting points from which to portray the different outlooks, life chances and activities of the sexes in relation to social structure. Despite their various differences, this analytic standpoint unites writings as divergent as Parsons’s classic essays on sex roles and the family (Parsons, 1940; 1942; 1943; 1954), Engels’s (1968) *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and more recent feminist writings (e.g. Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978). In these studies, sexual status is treated as a ‘social fact’ in a fully Durkheimian sense as an ‘external and constraining’ phenomenon. Garfinkel, by contrast, wanted to treat sexual status as a produced and reproduced fact. It is the constitution and reproduction of the ordinary facts of gender which is the object of inquiry. The reproduced differentiation of culturally specific ‘males’ and ‘females’ is thus the terminus of his investigation rather than its starting point. This differentiation is an overwhelming fact of social structure. Its reproduction, he proposes, is the outcome of a mass of indiscernible, yet familiar, socially organized practices. It was these latter which, in 1958, Garfinkel sought to disclose with the assistance of Agnes—a person whose determination to achieve ‘femininity’ and whose insight into its component features greatly helped Garfinkel to distance himself from the familiar phenomena of gender and to come to view them as ‘anthropologically strange.’

In reading Garfinkel's account of Agnes, it is useful to bear in mind that she was, in effect, presented with two separate, but overlapping, problems in managing her claims to be female. First, she had the problem of dealing with those who took her at 'face value' and knew nothing of her potentially discrediting male genitalia and previously masculine biography. With these persons—the majority of her associates—Agnes was preoccupied with generating and living within a female identity which was above suspicion. Second, Agnes, was compelled to deal with a range of persons—her parents and relatives, the medical and psychiatric staff at UCLA and, ultimately, her boyfriend Bill—who knew about these incongruous aspects of her anatomy and biography. With this second group of persons, Agnes's task became one of insisting that, despite the incongruities, she was 'essentially' and 'all along and in the first place' a female. This task, as we shall see, was necessitated as part of her long-term campaign to secure the sex-change operation as a moral right.

### Agnes: Sexual Status as a Methodic Production

As part of her task of maintaining herself as a bona fide female, Agnes—like other 'intersexed' persons—had become a sensitive ethnographer of gender. Continually anxious about the successful management of her self-presentation as a woman, she had indeed become acutely aware of the ways in which sexual status can have implications for the conduct of ordinary social activities. The range and scope of these implications are so great and so easily overlooked (*ibid.* 118) that it is worth beginning with an initial list of some of their aspects.

There are, first of all, the self-evident problems of achieving convincingly female dress, make-up, grooming and accoutrements as an initial precondition of being taken for female. To judge from Garfinkel's description, Agnes had largely overcome these problems before she presented herself at UCLA for the first time. Then there are the problems of managing appropriately feminine comportment—the behavioural manifestations of femininity: 'sitting like a woman,' 'walking like a woman,' 'talking like a woman' and so on. These behaviours are minutely accountable. For example, Agnes recollected that her brother had complained about her carrying her books to school like a girl and had 'demonstrated to her and insisted that she carry them like a boy' (*ibid.* 152). While, once again, Agnes had clearly mastered fundamental aspects of female behavioural comportment by the time she arrived at UCLA, the tasks of 'talking like a woman' continued to prove troublesome. For, it turned out, to talk like a woman required a reservoir of biographical experiences and 'knowhow—all of which had to have been experienced and appreciated in detail from the point of view of a girl. This reservoir of detailed experiences was necessary, first, to produce appropriately feminine talk and, secondly and more generally, to serve as an accumulating series of precedents with which to manage current situations (*ibid.* 130–1). In this context, Agnes repeatedly complained of her lack of an appropriate biography. After the change to living as a female, but before her operation, Agnes began to exchange 'gossip, and analyses of men, parties, and dating post-mortems' with roommates and wider circles of girlfriends (*ibid.* 147). Here, Garfinkel comments, 'two years of arduous female activities furnished for her a fascinating input of new experiences' which she used as resources to construct and reconstruct her own biography (*ibid.* 178). In what follows, we will briefly consider some aspects of Agnes's management of her sexual identity with those who did not know her secrets and with those who did.

### Managing with Those Who Were Ignorant

In dealing with those who knew nothing of her 'male' anatomy and biography, Agnes's central pre-occupation was to avoid the disclosure of her secrets.

In instance after instance the situation to be managed can be described in general as one in which the attainment of commonplace goals and attendant satisfactions involved with it a risk of exposure . . . Her characteristic situation in passing was one in which she had to be prepared to choose, and frequently chose, between securing the feminine identity and accomplishing *ordinary* goals . . . Security was to be protected first. The common satisfactions were to be obtained only if the prior conditions of the secured identity could be satisfied. Risks in this direction entailed the sacrifice of the other satisfactions. (ibid. 139–40)

The nature and overriding extent of Agnes's sacrifices of ordinary satisfactions can be glossed by noting that, although she could drive, Agnes did not own a car because she feared the exposure of her secret while unconscious from an accident (ibid. 141).

In order to protect her identity, Agnes engaged in extensive pre-planning and rehearsal of ordinary activities so as to minimize the risk of enforced exposure. In 'open' or 'unplannable' situations she adopted a range of procedures, which Garfinkel refers to as acting as a 'secret apprentice' and 'anticipatory following,' through which she remained inconspicuous while acquiring important feminine 'knowhow.' In all situations, Agnes was concerned not only with managing to present herself as an accountable (i.e. 'observable-reportable') female, but also with the accountability of her management strategies themselves.

Thus, in pre-planning a medical examination for a job, Agnes determined in advance that under no circumstances would she permit the examination to proceed lower than her abdomen. At the same time, she formulated the reasonable grounds ('modesty') in terms of which her refusal, if necessary, would be made accountable. These same grounds provided the basis for a 'no nudity' rule which Agnes and a girlfriend adopted in their shared apartment. Or again, in visiting the beach,

She would go along with the crowd, reciprocating their enthusiasm for bathing, if or until it was clear that a bathroom or the bedroom of a private home would be available in which to change to her bathing suit. Public baths and automobiles were to be avoided. If the necessary facilities were not available excuses were easy to make. As she pointed out, one is permitted not to be 'in the mood' to go bathing, though to like very much to sit on the beach. (ibid)

Here then, as in the other cases, there was a concern to make contingent on-the-spot decisions necessary for securing the female identity together with a concern for the secondary accountability of the management devices themselves.

A similar duality is evident in less structured contexts. In the context of gossip exchanges, post-mortems on social events or commentaries on the behaviour of other women, Agnes tended to play a passive role permitting the talk to instruct her as to proper conduct. Here, as Garfinkel comments, 'not only did she adopt the pose of passive acceptance of instructions, but she learned as well the value of passive acceptance as a desirable feminine character trait' (ibid, 147). Or again,

Another common set of occasions arose when she engaged in friendly conversation without having biographical or group affiliation data to swap off with her conversational partner. As Agnes said, 'Can you imagine all the blank years I have to fill in? Sixteen or seventeen years of my life that I have to make up for. I have to be careful of the things that I say, just natural things that could slip out . . . I just never say anything at all about my past that in any way would make a person ask what my

past life was like. I say general things. I don't say anything that could be misconstrued.' Agnes said that with men she was able to pass as an interesting conversationalist by encouraging her male partners to talk about themselves. Women partners, she said, explained the general and indefinite character of her biographical remarks, which she delivered with a friendly manner, by a combination of her niceness and modesty. 'They probably figure that I just don't like to talk about myself.' (ibid. 148)

In these remarks, once again, we find the 'dual accountability' constraints to which Agnes oriented. They surface too in other aspects of her 'secret apprenticeship.' For example, in permitting her boyfriend's mother to teach her to cook Dutch national dishes, Agnes simultaneously learned how to cook, *tout court*. This learning, secretly accomplished, was done under the accountable auspices of 'learning to cook Dutch-style.'

In reviewing Agnes's practices for passing with the ignorant, Garfinkel emphasizes the exceptional precision and detail of her observation of the particulars of ordinary social arrangements. He points to the fact that she was compelled to protect her identity across ranges of contingencies which could not be known in advance and 'in situations known with the most faltering knowledge, having marked uncertainties about the rules of practice' (ibid. 136). In an eloquent description of Agnes's predicament, Garfinkel summarizes it as follows:

In the conduct of her everyday affairs she had to choose among alternative courses of action even though the goal that she was trying to achieve was most frequently not clear to her prior to her having to take the actions whereby some goal might in the end have been realized. Nor had she any assurances of what the consequences of the choice might be prior to or apart from her having to deal with them. Nor were there clear rules that she could consult to decide the wisdom of the choice before the choice had to be exercised. For Agnes, stable routines of everyday life were 'disengageable' attainments assured by unremitting, momentary, situated courses of improvisation. Throughout these was the inhabiting presence of talk, so that however the action turned out, poorly or well, she would have been required to 'explain' herself, to have furnished 'good reasons' for having acted as she did. (ibid. 184)

The nature of Agnes's task in managing, constructing and reconstructing her social identity is thus perhaps well caught by the famous Neurath-Quine metaphor of being compelled to build the boat while already being out on the ocean. It was, unavoidably, a bootstrapping operation.

Above all, Garfinkel emphasizes, Agnes encountered scarcely any situations which could be treated as 'time out' from the work of passing. Always 'on parade,' Agnes was compelled at all times to secure her female identity 'by the acquisition and use of skills and capacities, the efficacious display of female appearances and performances and the mobilization of appropriate feelings and purposes' (ibid. 134). In this context,

the work and socially structured occasions of sexual passing were obstinately unyielding to (her) attempts to routinize the grounds of daily activities. This obstinacy points to the omnirelevance of sexual statuses to affairs of daily life as an invariant but unnoticed background in the texture of relevances that comprise the changing actual scenes of everyday life. (ibid. 118)

These problems and relevancies extended to the tasks of passing with those who, in part at least (see *ibid.* 285–8), knew of her secrets and it is to these latter that we now turn.

### Managing with Those Who Knew

As we have seen, Agnes's purpose in coming to UCLA was to secure a sex-change operation. This operation was the central preoccupation of her life and, as time progressed, it also became critical for the continuation of the relationship with her boyfriend which she treated as a major emblem of her femininity. In order to obtain this operation, Agnes had to undergo a wide variety of tests—anatomical, physiological, psychological and psychiatric—the results of which would form the basis on which the decision to operate or not would be made. In this context, Agnes's task became one of insisting that she had a right to the operation regardless of the results of the technical tests by doctors and others. She treated this right as a *moral* right and advanced it on the basis of what she urged as the *natural facts* of her femininity. Her task then, in a nutshell, was to insist that she was 'all along and in the first place' a *natural* female despite the incongruous anatomical, physiological, psychological and biological facts which might be amassed against the claim, and, on this basis, to urge the surgeons to remedy her condition in the direction 'intended by nature.'

It is clear, especially with the advantage of hindsight, that the task of presenting herself to those who knew her secrets as a 'natural-female-despite-the-incongruities' presented Agnes with management problems every bit as serious as those she encountered in presenting herself as a normal female to those who did not know them.

In her dealings with the specialists, Agnes systematically emphasized all aspects of her appearance, behaviour, motivation, biography and anatomy which could be held to be bona fide 'female' in character. Simultaneously, she down-graded every aspect which could be treated as evidence of her masculinity. Thus, in addition to her very feminine physical appearance described above, Agnes presented herself as 'ultra-female' both in her descriptions of her conduct and motivation in real world situations and in her actual conversations with the medical and psychiatric specialists who, indeed, 'came to refer to her presentation of the 120 percent female' (*ibid.* 129). Throughout

Agnes was the coy, sexually innocent, fun-loving, passive, receptive, 'young thing'.... As a kind of dialectical counterpart to the 120 per cent female Agnes portrayed her boyfriend as a 120 per cent male who, she said, when we first started to talk, and repeated through eight stressful weeks following the operation when post-operative complications had subsided and the recalcitrant vagina was finally turning out to be the thing the physicians had promised, 'wouldn't have been interested in me at all if I was abnormal.' (*ibid.*)

Closely aligned with this self-presentation was Agnes's account of her biography in which all 'evidences of a male upbringing were rigorously suppressed':

The child Agnes of Agnes's accounts did not like to play rough games like baseball; her 'biggest' problem was having to play boys' games; Agnes was more or less considered a sissy; Agnes was always the littlest one; Agnes played with dolls and cooked mud patty cakes for her brother; Agnes helped her mother with the household duties; Agnes doesn't remember what kinds of gifts she received from her father when she was a child. (*ibid.* 128–9)

Similarly, evidences of male sexual feelings were never avowed:

The penis of Agnes's accounts had never been erect; she was never curious about it; it was never scrutinized by her or by others; it never entered into games with other children; it never moved 'voluntarily'; it was never a source of pleasurable feelings. (ibid.)

Related to this suppression of Agnes's male biography and her non-acknowledgement of male sexual feelings was her attitude to her present anatomical state. Here Agnes downgraded her incongruous anatomical features within a *moral* idiom while upgrading those anatomical features which supported her claims to be female in a *naturalistic* way. Thus Agnes's penis 'had always been an accidental appendage stuck on by a cruel trick of fate' (ibid.). While,

with genitals ruled out as essential signs of her femininity, and needing essential and natural signs of female sexuality, she counted instead the life-long desire to be female and her prominent breasts. . . . Before all she counted her breasts as essential insignia. On several occasions in our conversations she expressed the relief and joy she felt when she noticed at the age of twelve that her breasts were starting to develop. (ibid. 13.1–2)

In this way, Agnes presented both her physical development and her female psychological make-up as corresponding elements of a natural feminine development. This insistence on a naturalistic orientation to her female insignia would cost her dear after the operation was finally performed:

Thus, after the operation she was a female with a 'man-made' vagina. In her anxious words, 'Nothing that is made by man can ever be as good as something that nature makes.' She and her boyfriend were agreed on this. In fact, her boyfriend who, in her accounts of him, prided himself as a harsh realist, insisted on this and taught it to her to her dismayed agreement. (ibid. 134)

It is significant, in this context, that Agnes made her final disclosures concerning the origins of her condition only after a further five years of successful life as a woman and after a leading urologist had told her 'unequivocally that her genitalia were quite beyond suspicion' (ibid. 286–7).

Agnes's successful 'feminization' of her biography was not without its lacunae. Reviewing the data obtained by all the researchers on her case, it was found that, despite their best efforts, no data were available about

(1) the possibility of an exogenous source of hormones; (2) the nature and extent of collaboration that occurred between Agnes and her mother and other persons; (3) any usable evidence let alone any detailed findings dealing with her male feelings and her male biography; (4) what her penis had been used for besides urination; (5) how she sexually satisfied herself and others and most particularly her boyfriend both before and after the disclosure; (6) the nature of any homosexual feelings, fears, thoughts and activities; (7) her feelings about herself as a 'phony female.' (ibid. 163)

In presenting herself as a natural female, Agnes was concerned to avoid saying or doing anything which might permit others to include her within a category of persons—homosexuals or

transvestites—who could be held to be essentially masculine. She had no interest in meeting ‘other trans-sexuals’ on the grounds of having nothing in common (ibid. 131). She insisted that she had always ‘steered clear of boys that acted like sissies’ (ibid.) and ‘just as normals frequently will be at a loss to understand “why a person would do that,” i.e. engage in homosexual activities or dress as a member of the opposite sex, so did Agnes display the same lack of “understanding” for such behaviour’ (ibid.). Here, then, Agnes sought to avoid any contamination of her essential femininity which might arise from an interest in, or understanding of, or having something in common with persons whose essential identities could be held to be other than female. Her concern, once again, was to portray herself as an exclusively normal, natural female who was such ‘without residue.’ So scrupulous was this concern that she would not even permit verbal formulations of her desires and achievements in such terms as ‘living or being treated *as a female*.’ In these contexts she would insist ‘not as a female, naturally’ (ibid. 170).

Finally, it will be recalled that Agnes treated her own desire to live as a female as itself evidence of her natural sexual status. In this context, she portrayed these desires as fundamental, axiomatic and inexplicable and avoided any psychological or other form of explanation of them that would relativize their status. Instead, she appealed to their life-long biographical continuity as evidence for their naturalness. Thus,

In common with normals, she treated her femininity as independent of the conditions of its occurrence and invariant to the vicissitudes of desires, agreements, random or wilful election, accident, considerations of advantage, available resources and opportunities . . . It remained the self-same thing in essence under all imaginable transformations of actual appearances, time, and circumstances. It withstood all exigencies. (ibid. 133–4)

This achievement of the objectivity, transcendence and naturalness of her femininity was critical for the advancement of Agnes’s moral claim to the body which she felt she should have had all along. The nature of her claim, in turn, was sensitive to the character of sexual status as a ‘natural-moral’ institution, which we will now discuss.

### Sexuality: A ‘Natural-Moral’ Institution

As indicated in the preceding chapters, one of Garfinkel’s theoretical preoccupations is with the ‘double-edged’ character of the accountable objects, events and activities which are treated as existent within a society or collectivity. When he proposes that ‘a society’s members encounter and know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action’ or, reversing the formulation, that the real-world features of a society are treated by its members as ‘objective, institutionalized facts, i.e. moral facts,’ he announces an interest in the fact that the ordinary members of a society treat its undoubtedly, objective features as both ‘normal’ and ‘moral.’ Social facts are treated both as ‘factual,’ ‘natural’ and ‘regular’ and as phenomena which the member is morally required to attend to, take into account and respect.

This interpenetration of the ‘factual’ and ‘moral’ aspects of social activities, Garfinkel proposes, is a core feature of the ways in which society members orient towards the world of everyday life:

They refer to this world as the ‘natural facts of life’ which, for members, are through and through moral facts of life. For members not only are matters so about familiar scenes, but they are so because it is morally right or wrong that they are so. (ibid. 35)

In sum, the everyday world as an institutionalized and institutionally provided-for domain of accountably real objects, events and activities is, from the society member's point of view, a 'natural-moral' world.

Sexual status is not excluded from this characterization. On the contrary, it vividly illustrates Garfinkel's analysis of the mutual interpenetration of the 'natural' with the 'moral.' As Garfinkel pointedly puts it, if one examines sexual status from the point of view of those who can take their own normally sexed status for granted, then 'perceived environments of sexed persons are populated with natural males, natural females, and persons who stand in moral contrast with them, i.e. incompetent, criminal, sick and sinful' (ibid. 122). The evidence from Garfinkel's study of Agnes profoundly illustrates this phenomenon. It indicates that everyone—the 'man on the street,' Agnes's relatives, the physicians on the case and Agnes herself—treated sexual status as a matter of 'objective, institutionalized facts, i.e. moral facts' (ibid.). Let us briefly review each of their attitudes in turn.

Garfinkel begins by noting that the ordinary member of society finds it odd to claim that decisions about sexuality can be problematic.

The normal finds it strange and difficult to lend credence to 'scientific' distributions of both male and female characteristics among persons, or a procedure for deciding sexuality which adds up lists of male and female characteristics and takes the excess as the criterion of the member's sex. (ibid. 123–4)

The normal, Garfinkel continues, finds these assertions strange because he (or she) cannot treat normal sexuality as a matter of technical niceties or of purely theoretical interest. Ordinary people are interested in normal sexual status as the legitimate grounds for initiating morally sanctionable and morally appropriate (i.e. accountable) courses of action. In this context, normal sexual status is treated as decided by reference to the 'sexual insignia' witnessed from birth onwards and 'decided by *nature*' (ibid.). These insignia subsequently form the accountable grounds for differentiated courses of treatment to their bearers. Decisions about sexual status cannot, if social life is to proceed smoothly, and need not await authoritative zoological or psychiatric determination.

The fact that this 'natural' distribution of sexual status is, simultaneously, a 'moral' distribution is revealed by ordinary reactions to persons who perceivedly deviate from the distribution. These reactions commonly take the form of moral retribution. The reactions of Agnes's family to her various changes illustrate this phenomenon and its vicissitudes. After her initial assumption of female status, Agnes reported, her cousin's attitude changed from one which was favourable to Agnes to one of strong disapproval. Other family members displayed 'open hostility' and 'consternation and severe disapproval' (ibid. 128). Thus, although philosophers have extensively criticized the 'naturalistic fallacy' (that is, reasoning from what is the case to what ought to be the case), Agnes's family members repeatedly employed this device to assert the grounds (Agnes's upbringing as a boy) on which she should mend her ways.

However, if the employment of the 'naturalistic fallacy' worked against Agnes before the operation, it worked in her favour afterwards when family members exhibited 'relieved acceptance and treatment of her as a "real female after all" (ibid.). In this context, Garfinkel comments:

... although the vagina was man-made it *was* a case of the real thing since it was what she was now seen to have been entitled to all along. Both the aunt and the mother were strongly impressed by the fact that the operation had been done at all

'in this country.' That the physicians at the UCLA Medical Centre by their actions reconstructed and validated Agnes's claim to her status as a natural female needs, of course, to be stressed. (*ibid.* 128)

Turning now to the physicians, it is again clear that, in making the decision to operate or not, they also sought a determination of Agnes's sexual status and thus similarly employed an 'is-to-ought' line of reasoning to support their decision. This use of what Agnes 'naturally was' as grounds to support the line of treatment decided upon is vividly displayed in Stoller's account of Agnes's case (1968: 133–9). In that part of his account reproduced by Garfinkel (1967: 286–7), Stoller goes to considerable lengths to show the grounds on which he had determined that Agnes did not desire the operation as a matter of wilful election and, in particular, that her condition was not the product of ingesting female hormones (estrogens). He concludes the discussion by accounting for the decision to operate as follows: 'Not being considered a transsexual, her genitalia were surgically transformed so that she now had the penis and testes removed and an artificial vagina constructed from the skin of the penis' (*ibid.* 286). The critical phrase in this passage is the first: 'not being considered a transsexual.' It expresses the belief of Stoller and his colleagues that Agnes was 'fundamentally' female and did not simply desire to be female as a matter of deliberate choice. The phrase indicates that, despite the technical expertise of Stoller and his colleagues, the fundamental grounds in terms of which he presented their decision to an audience of medical professionals—were the same 'natural-moral' grounds which were invoked as the basis of their treatments of Agnes by all of her 'significant others.'

Thus in her dealings with her entire world of associates—family, friends, boyfriend, medical specialists, psychiatrists and Garfinkel himself—Agnes was presented with one consuming and overriding problem: the presentation of herself as someone who was naturally, all along and in the first place a bona fide female. The task had to be carried forward across every possible exigency, across every possible or actual state of knowledge possessed individually or severally by these others. And it had to be managed as a condition, not only of acquiring the 'sexual insignia' which would place her beyond suspicion with those who would meet her in the future, but also as a condition of convincing those who, fully knowing her past, could nonetheless be persuaded that she was, finally, what she had claimed to be all along. To meet these tasks, Agnes had only one asset: her skills as a 'practical methodologist' acquired as a student of normal sexuality:

Her studies armed her with knowledge of how the organized features of ordinary settings are used by members as procedures for making appearances-of-sexuality-as-usual decidable as a matter of course. The scrutiny that she paid to appearances; her concerns for adequate motivation, relevance, evidence and demonstration; her sensitivity to devices of talk; her skill in detecting and managing 'tests' were attained as part of her mastery of trivial but necessary social tasks, to secure ordinary rights to live. Agnes was self-consciously equipped to teach normals how normals make sexuality happen in commonplace settings as an obvious, familiar, recognizable, natural, and serious matter of fact. Her specialty consisted of treating the 'natural facts of life' of socially recognized, socially managed sexuality as a managed production so as to be making these facts of life true, relevant, demonstrable, testable, countable, and available to inventory, cursory representation, anecdote, enumeration, or professional psychological assessment; in short, so as unavoidably in concert with others to be making these facts of life visible and reportable—accountable—for all practical purposes. (*ibid.* 180)

To summarize: Agnes subscribed to the ‘natural-moral’ order of sexual status within which normal sexual status is treated as a ‘natural fact’ while aberrations from the norm are treated as morally accountable. She subscribed to the objective reality of normal sexual status, despite her knowledge of its intricate management in daily life, both as a condition or maintaining her own identity and as a condition or achieving her desired objective—the operation. In this regard, as Garfinkel remarks, Agnes was no revolutionary (*ibid.* 177–8). Rather, in deploying her considerable methodological talents, Agnes sought in every way to conform with (and thus reproduce) the ‘natural-moral’ institutional order in which she so dearly wished to participate—as a normal, natural female.

## The Objective Reality of Sexual Status and Its Maintenance

The variety or Agnes’s management strategies and procedures, the resistance of ordinary social occasions to her attempts to routinize her daily life as a female and the fact that almost every occasion could somehow take on the features of a “‘character and fitness’ test” (*ibid.* 136) suggest that, in almost any occasion of social life, institutionalized features of sexual status are being produced and reproduced by ‘normally sexed’ males and females. Agnes’s case further suggests that, while institutionalized sexuality is being produced and reproduced in this way as a supremely natural ‘matter of fact,’ its reproduction is simultaneously supported by a massive ‘repair machinery’ of moral accountability which is brought to bear in cases of discrepancy or deviance. To make these—potentially relativizing—observations on the socially organized character of accountable sexuality is not to deny its objectivity or facticity. On the contrary, it is to begin to gain some appreciation of what its objectivity and facticity consist of. As Garfinkel summarizes it:

Agnes’s methodological practices are our sources of authority for the finding, and recommended study policy, that normally sexed persons are cultural events in societies whose character as visible orders of practical activities consist of members’ recognition and production practices. We learned from Agnes, who treated sexed persons as cultural events that members make happen, that members’ practices alone produce the observable-tellable normal sexuality of persons, and do so only, entirely, exclusively in actual, singular, particular occasions through actual witnessed displays of common talk and conduct. . . . The inordinate stresses in Agnes’s life were part and parcel of the concerted practices with normals, whereby the ‘normal, natural female’ as a moral thing to be and a moral way to feel and act was made to be happening, in demonstrable evidence, for all practical purposes. (*ibid.* 181)

This reference to the stresses which Agnes experienced, however, raises a core problem in Agnes’s management of ‘normality.’ While normals can routinize their management and detection of displays of ‘normally sexed’ conduct so that the latter become a ‘seen but unnoticed’ background to the texture of commonplace events, Agnes’s secrets were such that she could not lose sight of what, for normals, is so massively invisible:

For Agnes, in contrast to normals, the commonplace recognition of normal sexuality as a ‘case of the real thing’ consisted of a serious, situated, and prevailing accomplishment . . . Her anguish and triumphs resided in the observability, which was particular to her and uncommunicable, of the steps whereby the society hides from its members its activities of organization and thus leads them to see its features as

determinate and independent objects. For Agnes the observably normally sexed person consisted of inexorable, organizationally located work that provided the way that such objects arise. (ibid. 182)

In this context, Garfinkel remarks that Agnes found psychological and sociological theories of the ‘judgmental dope’ variety flattering (ibid. 183–4). For these approaches ‘theorized out of recognition’ her excruciating perception of the work of managing sexual status. They thus ‘naturalized’ (in the way that ordinary society members ‘naturalize’) the sexual status which she longed to treat as just that—*natural*. Within these theories, sexual status is unproblematically treated as ascribed and internalized. Whereas what Agnes knew without doubt was that this ‘ascribed’ status is through and through *achieved* as the product of unnoticed, yet unremitting, work.

Reflecting for a moment on the Agnes study, it is surprising to realize the extent to which gender differentiation consists of a filigree of small-scale, socially organized behaviours which are unceasingly iterated. Together these—individually insignificant—behaviours interlock to constitute the great public institution of gender as a morally-organized-as-natural fact of life. This institution is comparatively resistant to change. To adapt Wittgenstein’s famous analogy, the social construction of gender from a mass of individual social practices resembles the spinning of a thread in which fibre is spun on fibre. And, as Wittgenstein points out, ‘the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres’ (Wittgenstein, 1958: para. 67e). But if gender manifests itself as a density of minutiae, the latter are nonetheless stabilized both individually and collectively by the apparatus of moral accountability which we have repeatedly seen in action. In this context it is perhaps ironic that Freud could not trust the facts of culture sufficiently to base his account of the differentiation between the sexes on cultural mechanisms. For Freud, gender differentiation is ultimately based on a single slender thread: the psychological responses of males and females to the facts of anatomy. For Garfinkel, by contrast, the institution of gender appears as a densely woven fabric of morally accountable cultural practices which are throughout both accountable, and accountably treated, as natural.

## Summary

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In this chapter, we have addressed the construction of “the self,” and how our individual identities are influenced by larger physical environment, our biology, culture, family, and peers. Each of these elements, and “the self,” interact across the life span, from birth to death.

It is equally important in this final chapter to reflect upon the role of individual choice and intent. Do you believe that others, including the larger culture, dictate your roles and success (external locus of control) or, that you can proactively determine your own destiny (internal locus of control)? Do you fulfill others’ prophecies as to how you will or will not succeed—or proactively create your own visions and maps to success? Does spirituality play a role in your communication with self and others?

Ultimately, it is communication within the self (intrapersonal communication) that most influences our being. We hope that this book will have had some small part in elucidating that process, and wish you, our reader, much joy and future success in that journey.





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