

to fight my own battles of identification, it would be the incidents that made me realize with my heart that cripples could be identified with characteristics other than their physical handicap. I managed to see that cripples could be comely, charming, ugly, lovely, stupid, brilliant—just like all other people, and I discovered that I was able to hate or love a cripple in spite of his handicap.⁸⁰

It may be added that in looking back to the occasion of discovering that persons with his stigma are human beings like everyone else, the individual may bring to bear a later occasion when his pre-stigma friends imputed un-humanness to those he had by then learned to see as full-fledged persons like himself. Thus, in reviewing her experience as a circus worker, a young girl sees first that she had learned her fellow-workers are not freaks, and second that her pre-circus friends fear for her having to travel in a bus along with other members of the troupe.⁸¹

Another turning point—retrospectively if not originally—is the isolating, incapacitating experience, often a period of hospitalization, which comes later to be seen as the time when the individual was able to think through his problem, learn about himself, sort out his situation, and arrive at a new understanding of what is important and worth seeking in life.

It should be added that not only are personal experiences retrospectively identified as turning points, but experiences once removed may be employed in this way. For example, a reading of the literature of the group may itself provide an experience felt and claimed as reorganizing:

I do not think it is claiming too much to say that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a fair and truthful panorama of slavery; however that may be, it opened my eyes as to who and what I was and what my country considered me; in fact, it gave me my bearing.⁸²

⁸⁰ Carling, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁸¹ C. Clausen, *I Love You Honey But the Season's Over* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), p. 217.

⁸² Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Johnson's novel, like others of its kind, provides a nice instance of myth-making, being a literary organization of many of the crucial moral experiences and crucial turning points retrospectively available to those in a stigmatized category.

2.

INFORMATION CONTROL and PERSONAL IDENTITY

The Discredited and the Discreditable

When there is a discrepancy between an individual's actual social identity and his virtual one, it is possible for this fact to be known to us before we normals contact him, or to be quite evident when he presents himself before us. He is a discredited person, and it is mainly he I have been dealing with until now. As suggested, we are likely to give no open recognition to what is discrediting of him, and while this work of careful disattention is being done, the situation can become tense, uncertain, and ambiguous for all participants, especially the stigmatized one.

The cooperation of a stigmatized person with normals in act-

ing as if his known differentness were irrelevant and not attended to is one main possibility in the life of such a person. However, when his differentness is not immediately apparent, and is not known beforehand (or at least known by him to be known to the others), when in fact his is a discreditable not a discredited, person, then the second main possibility in his life is to be found. The issue is not that of managing tension generated during social contacts, but rather that of managing information about his failing. To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where. For example, while the mental patient is in the hospital, and when he is with adult members of his own family, he is faced with being treated tactfully as if he were sane when there is known to be some doubt, even though he may not have any; or he is treated as insane, when he knows this is not just. But for the ex-mental patient the problem can be quite different; it is not that he must face prejudice against himself, but rather that he must face unwitting acceptance of himself by individuals who are prejudiced against persons of the kind he can be revealed to be. Wherever he goes his behavior will falsely confirm for the other that they are in the company of what in effect they demand but may discover they haven't obtained, namely, a mentally untainted person like themselves. By intention or in effect the ex-mental patient conceals information about his real social identity, receiving and accepting treatment based on false suppositions concerning himself. It is this second general issue, the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self, that I am focusing on in these notes, in brief, "passing." The concealment of creditable facts—reverse passing—of course occurs, but is not relevant here.¹

¹ For one instance of reverse passing, see "H. E. R. Cules," "Ghost-Writer and Failure," in P. Toynbee, ed., *Underdogs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), Chap. 2, pp. 30-39. There are many other examples. I knew a physician who was careful to refrain from using external symbols of her status, such as car-license tags, her only evidence of profession being an identification carried in her wallet. When faced with a public accident in which medical service was already being rendered

Social Information

The information of most relevance in the study of stigma has certain properties. It is information about an individual. It is about his more or less abiding characteristics, as opposed to the moods, feelings, or intents that he might have at a particular moment.² The information, as well as the sign through which it is conveyed, is reflexive and embodied; that is, it is conveyed by the very person it is about, and conveyed through bodily expression in the immediate presence of those who receive the expression. Information possessing all of these properties I will here call "social." Some signs that convey social information may be frequently and steadily available, and routinely sought and received; these signs may be called "symbols."

The social information conveyed by any particular symbol may merely confirm what other signs tell us about the individual, filling out our image of him in a redundant and unproblematic way. Some lapel buttons, attesting to social club membership, are examples, as are male wedding rings in some contexts. However, the social information conveyed by a symbol can establish a special claim to prestige, honor, or desirable class position—a claim that might not otherwise be presented or, if otherwise presented, then not automatically granted. Such a sign is popularly called a "status symbol," although the term "prestige symbol" might be more accurate, the former term being more suitably employed when a well-organized social position of some kind is the referent. Prestige symbols can be contrasted to stigma symbols, namely, signs which are especially effective in drawing attention to a debasing identity discrep-

the victim, or in which the victim was past helping, she would, upon examining the victim at a distance from the circle around him, quietly go her way without announcing her competence. In these situations she was what might be called a female impersonator.

² The difference between mood information and other kinds of information is treated in G. Stone, "Appearance and the Self" in A. Rose, *Human Behavior and Social Processes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), pp. 86-118. See also E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 24-25.

ancy, breaking up what would otherwise be a coherent overall picture, with a consequent reduction in our valuation of the individual. The shaved head of female collaborators in World War II is an example, as is an habitual solecism through which someone affecting middle class manner and dress repeatedly employs a word incorrectly or repeatedly mispronounces it.

In addition to prestige symbols and stigma symbols, one further possibility is to be found, namely, a sign that tends—in fact or hope—to break up an otherwise coherent picture but in this case in a positive direction desired by the actor, not so much establishing a new claim as throwing severe doubt on the validity of the virtual one. I shall refer here to *disidentifiers*. One example is the “good English” of an educated northern Negro visiting the South;³ another is the turban and mustache affected by some urban lower class Negroes.⁴ A study of illiterates provides another illustration:

Therefore, when goal orientation is pronounced or imperative and there exists a high probability that definition as illiterate is a bar to the achievement of the goal, the illiterate is likely to try to “pass” as literate. . . . The popularity in the group studied of windowpane lenses with heavy horn frames (“bop glasses”) may be viewed as an attempt to emulate the stereotype of the businessman-teacher-young intellectual and especially the high status jazz musician.⁵

A New York specialist in the arts of vagrancy provides still another illustration:

After seven-thirty in the evening, in order to read a book in Grand Central or Penn Station, a person either has to wear horn-rimmed glasses or look exceptionally prosperous. Anyone else is apt to come under surveillance. On the other hand, newspaper readers never seem to attract attention and even the seediest vagrant can sit in

³ G. J. Fleming, “My Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experience,” *Negro Digest* (June 1954), 67-68.

⁴ B. Wolfe, “Ecstatic in Blackface,” *Modern Review*, III (1950), 204.

⁵ Freeman and Kasenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

Grand Central all night without being molested if he continues to read a paper.⁶

Note that in this discussion of prestige symbols, stigma symbols, and disidentifiers, signs have been considered which routinely convey social information. These symbols must be distinguished from fugitive signs that have not been institutionalized as information carriers. When such signs make claims to prestige, one can call them points; when they discredit tacit claims, one can call them slips.

Some signs carrying social information, being present, first of all, for other reasons, have only an overlay of informational function. There are stigma symbols that provide examples: the wrist markings which disclose that an individual has attempted suicide; the arm pock marks of drug addicts; the handcuffed wrists of convicts in transit;⁷ or black eyes when worn in public by females, as a writer on prostitution suggests:

“Outside [the prison where she now is] I’d be in the soup with it. Well, you know how it is: the law sees a chick with a shiner figures she’s up to something. Bull figures maybe in the life. Next thing trails her around. Then maybe bang! busted.”⁸

Other signs are designed by man solely for the purpose of conveying social information, as in the case of insignia of military rank. It should be added that the significance of the underlay of a sign can become reduced over time, becoming, at the extreme, merely vestigial, even while the informational function of the activity remains constant or increases in importance. Further, a sign that appears to be present for non-informational reasons may sometimes be manufactured with malice aforethought solely because of its informing function, as when dueling scars were carefully planned and inflicted.

⁶ E. Love, *Subways Are for Sleeping* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957), p. 28.

⁷ A. Heckstall-Smith, *Eighteen Months* (London: Allan Wingate, 1954), p. 43.

⁸ T. Rubin, *In the Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 69.

Signs conveying social information vary according to whether or not they are congenital, and, if not, whether, once employed, they become a permanent part of the person. (Skin color is congenital; a brand mark or maiming is permanent but not congenital; a convict's head-shave is neither congenital nor permanent.) More important, impermanent signs solely employed to convey social information may or may not be employed against the will of the informant; when they are, they tend to be stigma symbols.⁹ Later it will be necessary to consider stigma symbols that are voluntarily employed.

It is possible for signs which mean one thing to one group to mean something else to another group, the same category being designated but differently characterized. For example, the shoulder patches that prison officials require escape-prone prisoners to wear¹⁰ can come to mean one thing to guards, in general negative, while being a mark of pride for the wearer relative to his fellow prisoners. The uniform of an officer may be a matter of pride to some, to be worn on every possible occasion; for other officers, weekends may represent a time when they can exercise

⁹ In his *American Notes*, written on the basis of his 1842 trip, Dickens records in his chapter on slavery some pages of quotations from local newspapers regarding lost and found slaves. The identifications contained in these advertisements provide a full range of identifying signs. First, there are relatively stable features of the body that in context can incidentally provide partial or full positive identification: age, sex, and scarrings (these resulting from shot and knife wounds, from accidents, and from lashings). Self-admitted name is also provided, though usually, of course, only the first name. Finally, stigma symbols are often cited, notably branded initials and cropped ears. These symbols communicate the social identity of slave but, unlike iron bands around the neck or leg, also communicate something more narrow than that, namely, ownership by a particular master. Authorities then had two concerns about an apprehended Negro: whether or not he was a runaway slave, and, if he was, to whom did he belong.

¹⁰ See G. Dendrickson and F. Thomas, *The Truth About Dartmoor* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1954), p. 55, and F. Norman, *Bang to Rights* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958), p. 125. The use of this type of symbol is well presented in E. Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell* (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., n.d.), pp. 41-42, where he specifies the markings used in concentration camps to identify differentially political prisoners, second offenders, criminals, Jehovah's Witnesses, "shiftless elements," Gypsies, Jews, "race defilers," foreign nationals (according to nation), feeble-minded, and so forth. Slaves on the Roman slave market also were often labeled as to nationality; see M. Gordon, "The Nationality of Slaves Under the Early Roman Empire," in M. I. Finley, ed., *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1960), p. 171.

their choice and wear mufti, passing as civilians. Similarly, while the obligation to wear the school cap in town may be seen as a privilege by some boys, as will the obligation to wear a uniform on leave by "other ranks," still there will be wearers who feel that the social information conveyed thereby is a means of ensuring control and discipline over them when they are off duty and off the premises.¹¹ So, too, during the eighteen hundreds in California, the absence of a pigtail (queue) on a Chinese man signified for Occidentals a degree of acculturation, but to fellow-Chinese a question would be raised as to respectability—specifically, whether or not the individual had served a term in prison where cutting off of the queue was obligatory; loss of queue was for a time, then, very strongly resisted.¹²

Signs carrying social information vary of course as to reliability. Distended capillaries on the cheek and nose, sometimes called "venous stigmata" with more aptness than meant, can be and are taken as indicating alcoholic excess. However, teetotalers can exhibit the same symbol for other physiological reasons, thereby giving rise to suspicions about themselves which aren't justified, but with which they must deal nonetheless.

A final point about social information must be raised; it has to do with the informing character of the "with" relationship in our society. To be "with" someone is to arrive at a social occasion in his company, walk with him down a street, be a member of his party in a restaurant, and so forth. The issue is that in certain circumstances the social identity of those an individual is with can be used as a source of information concerning his own social identity, the assumption being that he is what the others are. The extreme, perhaps, is the situation in criminal circles: a person wanted for arrest can legally contaminate anyone he is seen with, subjecting them to arrest on suspicion. (A

¹¹ T. H. Pear, *Personality, Appearance and Speech* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), p. 58.

¹² A. McLeod, *Pigtails and Gold Dust* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1947), p. 28. At times religious-historical significance was also attached to wearing the queue; see *ibid.*, p. 204.

person for whom there is a warrant is therefore said "to have smallpox," and his criminal disease is said to be "catching."¹³ In any case, an analysis of how people manage the information they convey about themselves will have to consider how they deal with the contingencies of being seen "with" particular others.

Visibility

Traditionally, the question of passing has raised the issue of the "visibility" of a particular stigma, that is, how well or how badly the stigma is adapted to provide means of communicating that the individual possesses it. For example, ex-mental patients and expectant unmarried fathers are similar in that their failing is not readily visible; the blind, however, are easily seen. Visibility, of course, is a crucial factor. That which can be told about an individual's social identity at all times during his daily round and by all persons he encounters therein will be of great importance to him. The consequence of a presentation that is perforce made to the public at large may be small in particular contacts, but in every contact there will be some consequences, which, taken together, can be immense. Further, routinely available information about him is the base from which he must begin when deciding what tack to take in regard to whatever stigma he possesses. Thus, any change in the way the individual must always and everywhere present himself will for these very reasons be fateful—this presumably providing the Greeks with the idea of stigma in the first place.

Since it is through our sense of sight that the stigma of others most frequently becomes evident, the term visibility is perhaps not too misleading. Actually, the more general term, "perceptibility" would be more accurate, and "evidentness" more accurate still. A stammer, after all, is a very "visible" defect, but in the first instance because of sound, not sight. Before the concept of visibility can be safely used even in this corrected version,

¹³ See D. Maurer, *The Big Con* (New York: Pocket Books, 1949), p. 298.

however, it must be distinguished from three other notions that are often confused with it.

First, the visibility of a stigma must be distinguished from its "known-about-ness." When an individual's stigma is very visible, his merely contacting others will cause his stigma to be known about. But whether others know about the individual's stigma will depend on another factor in addition to its current visibility, namely, whether or not they have previous knowledge about him—and this can be based on gossip about him or a previous contact with him during which his stigma was visible.

Secondly, visibility must be distinguished from one of its particular bases, namely, obtrusiveness. When a stigma is immediately perceivable, the issue still remains as to how much it interferes with the flow of interaction. For example, at a business meeting a participant in a wheelchair is certainly seen to be in a wheelchair, but around the conference table his failing can become relatively easy to disattend. On the other hand, a participant with a speech impediment, who in many ways is much less handicapped than someone in a wheelchair, can hardly open his mouth without destroying any unconcern that may have arisen concerning his failing, and he will continue to introduce uneasiness each time thereafter that he speaks. The very mechanics of spoken encounters constantly redirect attention to the defect, constantly making demands for clear and rapid messages that must constantly be defaulted. It may be added that the same failing can have different expressions, each with a different degree of obtrusiveness. For example, a blind person with a white cane gives quite visible evidence that he is blind; but this stigma symbol, once noted, can sometimes be disattended, along with what it signifies. But the blind person's failure to direct his face to the eyes of his co-participants is an event that repeatedly violates communication etiquette and repeatedly disrupts the feed-back mechanics of spoken interaction.

Thirdly, the visibility of a stigma (as well as its obtrusiveness) must be disentangled from certain possibilities of what can be called its "perceived focus." We normals develop conceptions,

whether objectively grounded or not, as to the sphere of life-activity for which an individual's particular stigma primarily disqualifies him. Ugliness, for example, has its initial and prime effect during social situations, threatening the pleasure we might otherwise take in the company of its possessor. We perceive, however, that his condition ought to have no effect on his competency in solitary tasks, although of course we may discriminate against him here simply because of the feelings we have about looking at him. Ugliness, then, is a stigma that is focused in social situations. Other stigmas, such as a diabetic condition,¹⁴ are felt to have no initial effect on the individual's qualifications for face-to-face interaction; they lead us first to discriminate in such matters as job allocation, and affect immediate social interaction only, for example, because the stigmatized individual may have attempted to keep his differentness a secret and feels unsure about being able to do so, or because the others present know about his condition and are making a painful effort not to allude to it. Many other stigmas fall in between these two extremes regarding focus, being perceived to have a broad initial effect in many different areas of life. For example, a person with cerebral palsy may not only be seen as burdensome in face-to-face communication, but may also induce the feeling that he is questionable as a solitary task performer.

The question of visibility, then, must be distinguished from some other issues: the known-about-ness of the attribute, its obtrusiveness, and its perceived focus. This still leaves unconsidered the tacit assumption that somehow the public at large will be engaged in the viewing. But as we shall see, specialists at uncovering identity can be involved, and their training may allow them to be immediately struck by something that is invisible to the laity. A physician who meets on the street a man with dull red discoloration of the cornea and notched teeth is meeting someone who openly displays two of Hutchinson's signs and is likely to be syphilitic. Others present, however, being

¹⁴ "A Reluctant Pensioner," "Unemployed Diabetic," in Toynbee, *op. cit.*, Chap. 9, pp. 132-146.

medically blind, will see no evil. In general, then, the decoding capacity of the audience must be specified before one can speak of degree of visibility.

Personal Identity

In order systematically to consider the situation of the discreditable person and his problem of concealment and disclosure, it was necessary first to examine the character of social information and of visibility. Before proceeding it will be necessary to consider, and at considerable length, still another factor, that of identification—in the criminological and not the psychological sense.

So far, the analysis of social interaction between the stigmatized and the normal has not required that those involved in the mixed contact know one another "personally" before the interaction begins. This seems reasonable. Stigma management is an offshoot of something basic in society, the stereotyping or "profiling" of our normative expectations regarding conduct and character; stereotyping is classically reserved for customers, orientals, and motorists, that is, persons who fall into very broad categories and who may be passing strangers to us.

There is a popular notion that although impersonal contacts between strangers are particularly subject to stereotypical responses, as persons come to be on closer terms with each other this categoric approach recedes and gradually sympathy, understanding, and a realistic assessment of personal qualities take its place.¹⁵ While a blemish such as a facial disfigurement might put off a stranger, intimates presumably would not be put off by such matters. The area of stigma management, then, might be seen as something that pertains mainly to public life, to contact between strangers or mere acquaintances, to one end of a continuum whose other pole is intimacy.

The idea of such a continuum no doubt has some validity. For

¹⁵ A traditional statement of this theme may be found in N. S. Shaler, *The Neighbor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904).

example, it has been shown that in addition to techniques for handling strangers, the physically handicapped may develop special techniques for moving past the initial tactfulness and distance they are likely to receive; they may attempt to move on to a more "personal" plane where in fact their defect will cease to be a crucial factor—an arduous process Fred Davis calls "breaking through."¹⁶ Further, those with a bodily stigma report that, within certain limits, normals with whom they have repeated dealings will gradually come to be less put off by the disability, so that something like a daily round of normalization may hopefully develop. A blind person's round may be cited:

There are now barbershops where I am received with some of the calmness of old, of course, and hotels, restaurants, and public buildings which I can enter without engendering a feeling that something is going to happen; a few trolley motormen and bus drivers now merely wish me Good Morning when I get on with my dog, and a few waiters I know serve me with traditional unconcern. Naturally, the immediate circle of my family has long since ceased doing any unnecessary worrying about me, and so have most of my intimate friends. To that extent I have made a dent in the education of the world.¹⁷

The same sheltering can presumably occur in regard to whole categories of the stigmatized: the service shops which are sometimes found in the immediate neighborhood of mental hospitals may become places with high tolerance for psychotic behavior; the neighborhoods around some medical hospitals develop a capacity for calm treatment of the facially disfigured who are undergoing skin grafting; the town in which a seeing-eye school is located learns to countenance blind students engaged in the act of holding a harness attached to a human instructor all the while offering him periodic words of canine encouragement.¹⁸

In spite of this evidence for everyday beliefs about stigma and

¹⁶ Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

¹⁷ Cheigny, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁸ Keitlen, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

familiarity, one must go on to see that familiarity need not reduce contempt.¹⁹ For example, normals who live adjacent to settlements of the tribally stigmatized often manage quite handily to sustain their prejudices. It is more important here, however, to see that the various consequences of making a whole array of virtual assumptions about an individual are clearly present in our dealings with persons with whom we have had a long-standing, intimate, exclusive relationship. In our society, to speak of a woman as one's wife is to place this person in a category of which there can be only one current member, yet a category is nonetheless involved, and she is merely a member of it. Unique, historically entangled features are likely to tint the edges of our relation to this person; still, at the center is a full array of socially standardized anticipations that we have regarding her conduct and nature as an instance of the category "wife," for example, that she will look after the house, entertain our friends, and be able to bear children. She will be a good or a bad wife, and be this relative to standard expectations, ones that other husbands in our group have about their wives too. (Surely it is scandalous to speak of marriage as a particularistic relationship.) Thus, whether we interact with strangers or intimates, we will find that the finger tips of society have reached bluntly into the contact, even here putting us in our place.

There are sure to be cases where those who are not required to share the individual's stigma or spend much time exerting tact and care in regard to it may find it easier to accept him, just because of this, than do those who are obliged to be in full-time contact with him.

When one moves from a consideration of discredited persons to discreditable ones, much additional evidence is found that the individual's intimates as well as his strangers will be put off by his stigma. For one thing, the individual's intimates can become just the persons from whom he is most concerned with

¹⁹ For evidence that normal children at a summer camp do not come with time to accept physically handicapped fellow-members more readily, see Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

concealing something shameful; the situation of homosexuals provides an illustration:

Although it is usual for a homosexual to protest that his deviation is not a disease, it is noteworthy that if he consults anyone at all, it is more likely to be a doctor than anyone else. But it is not likely to be his own family doctor. Most of the contacts were anxious to keep their homosexuality hidden from their family. Even some of those who behave fairly openly in public are most careful to avoid arousing suspicions in the family circle.²⁰

Further, while one parent in a family may share a dark secret about, and with, the other, the children of the house may be considered not only unsafe receptacles for the information but also of such tender nature as to be seriously damaged by the knowledge. The case of the mentally hospitalized parent is an example:

In interpreting the father's illness to younger children, almost all the mothers attempt to follow a course of concealment. The child is told either that his father is in a hospital (without further explanation) or that he is in the hospital suffering from a physical ailment (he has a toothache, or trouble with his leg, or a tummy ache, or a headache).²¹

[Wife of mental patient] "I live in a horror—a perfect horror—that some people will make a crack about it to Jim (child). . . ." ²²

One may add that there are some stigmas that are so easily concealed that they figure very little in the individual's relation to strangers and mere acquaintances, having their effect chiefly upon intimates—frigidity, impotence, and sterility being good examples. Thus, in trying to account for the fact that alcoholism

²⁰ G. Westwood, *A Minority* (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1960), p. 40.

²¹ M. R. Yarrow, J. A. Clausen, and P. R. Robbins, "The Social Meaning of Mental Illness," *Journal of Social Issues*, XI (1955), 40-41. This paper provides much useful material on stigma management.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

does not seem to disqualify a man from embarking upon marriage, one student suggests that:

It is also possible that the circumstances of courtship or the pattern of the drinking may so lower the visibility of alcoholism that it is not a factor in mate selection. The more intimate interaction of marriage may then bring out the problem in a form recognizable to the spouse.²³

Moreover, intimates can come to play a special role in the discreditable person's management of social situations, so that even where their acceptance of him is not influenced by his stigma, their duties will be.

Instead, then, of thinking of a continuum of relationships, with categoric and concealing treatment at one end and particularistic, open treatment at the other, it might be better to think of various structures in which contact occurs and is stabilized—public streets and their strangers, perfunctory service relations, the workplace, the neighborhood, the domestic scene—and to see that in each case characteristic discrepancies are likely to occur between virtual and actual social identity, and characteristic efforts are made to manage the situation.

And yet, the whole problem of managing stigma is influenced by the issue of whether or not the stigmatized person is known to us personally. To attempt to describe just what this influence is, however, requires the clear formulation of an additional concept, *personal identity*.²⁴

²³ E. Lemert, "The Occurrence and Sequence of Events in the Adjustment of Families to Alcoholism," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, XXI (1960), 683.

²⁴ A distinction between personal identity and role identity is presented clearly in R. Sommer, H. Osmond, and L. Pancyr, "Problems of Recognition and Identity," *International Journal of Parapsychology*, II (1960), 99-119, where the problem is posed as to how one establishes either or disproves either. See also Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 60. The idea of personal identity is also used by C. Rolph, *Personal Identity* (London: Michael Joseph, 1957), and by E. Schachtel, "On Alienated Concepts of Identity," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, XXI (1961), 120-121, under the title, "paper identity." The concept of legal or jural identity corresponds closely to personal identity except that (as Harvey Sacks has informed me) there are some situations, as in adoptions, where the legal identity of an individual may be changed.

It is well appreciated that in small, long-standing social circles each member comes to be known to the others as a "unique" person. The term unique is subject to pressure by maiden social scientists who would make something warm and creative out of it, a something not to be further broken down, at least by sociologists; nonetheless, the term does involve some relevant ideas.

One idea involved in the notion of "uniqueness" of an individual is that of a "positive mark" or "identity peg," for example, the photographic image of the individual in others' minds, or the knowledge of his special place in a particular kinship network. An interesting comparative case is that of the Tuareg of West Africa whose males cover their faces leaving only a small slit to see out of; here, apparently, the face as an anchorage for personal identification is replaced by body appearance and physical style.²⁵ Only one person at a time can be fitted to the image I am here discussing, and he who qualified in the past is the self-same person who qualifies in the present and will do so in the future. Note that items such as fingerprints which are the most effective means of rendering individuals identifiably different are also items in terms of which they are essentially similar.

A second idea is that, while most particular facts about an individual will be true of others too, the full set of facts known about an intimate is not found to hold, as a combination, for any other person in the world, this adding a means by which he can be positively distinguished from everyone else. Sometimes this complex of information is name-bound, as in the case of a police dossier; sometimes it is body-bound, as when we come to know the pattern of behavior of someone whose face we know but whose name we do not know; often the information is bound both to name and body.

A third idea is that what distinguishes an individual from all others is the core of his being, a general and central aspect of him, making him different through and through, not merely identifiably different, from those who are most like him.

²⁵ I am here indebted to an unpublished paper by Robert Murphy, "On Social Distance and the Veil."

By *personal identity*, I have in mind only the first two ideas—positive marks or identity pegs, and the unique combination of life history items that comes to be attached to the individual with the help of these pegs for his identity. Personal identity, then, has to do with the assumption that the individual can be differentiated from all others and that around this means of differentiation a single continuous record of social facts can be attached, entangled, like candy floss, becoming then the sticky substance to which still other biographical facts can be attached. What is difficult to appreciate is that personal identity can and does play a structured, routine, standardized role in social organization just because of its one-of-a-kind quality.

The process of personal identification can be seen at work clearly if one takes as a point of reference not a small group but a large impersonal organization, such as a state government. It is now standard organizational practice that a means of positive identification for every individual to be dealt with is officially recorded, that is, a set of marks is used that distinguishes the person so marked from all other individuals. As suggested, the choice of mark is itself quite standard: unchanging biological attributes such as handwriting or photographically attested appearance; permanently recordable items such as birth certificate, name, and serial number. Recently, through the use of computer analysis, experimental progress has been made in using speech and handwriting qualities as identity pegs, thus exploiting a minor expressive feature of behavior much as specialists do in "authenticating" paintings. More important, the Social Security Act of 1935 in America ensures that almost every employee will have a unique registration number to which can be affixed a life-long record of employment, a scheme of identification which has already worked considerable hardship on our criminal classes. In any case, once an identity peg has been made ready, material, if and when available, can be hung on it; a dossier can be developed, usually contained and filed in a manila folder. One can expect that personal identification of its citizens by the state will increase, even as devices are refined for making the record

of a particular individual more easily available to authorized persons and more inclusive of social facts concerning him, for example, receipt of dividend payments.

There is considerable popular interest in the efforts of harried persons to acquire a personal identity not their "own" or to disengage themselves from the one that was originally theirs, as in efforts to scar finger tips or to destroy public birth certificate records. In actual cases, personal name is usually the issue, because of all identity pegs it seems to be the one most generally employed and at the same time the one that is in certain ways easiest to tamper with. The respectable and legally advisable way of changing one's name is by a documented act, the record of which is available in a public file. A single continuity is thus preserved in spite of apparent diversity.²⁶ This is the case, for example, when a woman changes her last name through the act of marriage. In the entertainment world it is common for a performer to change his name, but here, too, a record of the previous name is likely to be available, and even widely known, as is also the case with pen-named authors. Occupations where a change in name can occur without being officially recorded, such as those of prostitute, criminal, and revolutionary, are not "legitimate" trades. A remaining case is that of the Catholic clerical orders. Wherever an occupation carries with it a change in name, recorded or not, one can be sure that an important breach is involved between the individual and his old world.

It should be stated that some name changes, such as those employed by draft dodgers and motel guests, are specifically oriented to the legal aspects of personal identification, while other changes, such as ones employed by ethnics, are oriented to the issue of social identity. One student implies that some professional entertainers have the distinction of qualifying on both counts:

The average chorus girl changes her name almost as frequently as her coiffure to accord with current theatrical popularity, show-

²⁶ See Rolph, *Personal Identity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16.

business superstitions, or, in some cases, to avoid payment of Equity dues.²⁷

I might add that professional criminals employ two special types of re-naming: aliases, used very temporarily, although often repeatedly, to avoid personal identification; "monikers," namely, nicknames given in the criminal community and retained for life, but used only by and to members of the community or the wise.

A name, then, is a very common but not very reliable way of fixing identity. When a court of law must deal with someone who has every motivation to misrepresent himself, it is understandable that other positive marks will be sought. The English case may be cited:

. . . personal identity is proved in courts of law, not by reference to names, not even mainly by direct testimony, but "presumptively" by evidence of similarities or differences in personal characteristics.²⁸

The question of social information must now be raised again. The embodied signs previously considered, whether of prestige or stigma, pertain to social identity. Clearly all of these must be distinguished from the *documentation* that individuals carry around with them purportedly establishing personal identity. These documents have come to be widely used in Britain and America by natives as well as foreigners. Registration cards and drivers' licenses (containing fingerprints, signatures, and sometimes photographs) are felt to be necessary.²⁹ Along with these self-identifications, the individual may carry documentation of age (in the case of youths who wish to frequent gambling establishments or to be served liquor), a license to engage in protected or dangerous trades, permission to be away from barracks, and so

²⁷ A. Hartman, "Criminal Aliases: A Psychological Study," *Journal of Psychology*, XXXII (1951), 53.

²⁸ Rolph, *Personal Identity*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁹ In Britain, currently, citizens are not obliged to carry identification documents, although aliens and motorists are; also, under certain circumstances, British citizens can decline to tell policemen who they are. See *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

forth. This information is often supplemented by family pictures, evidence of past military service, and even photostatic copies of college certificates. Recently, information about the bearer's medical status has also appeared, and its general use advocated:

Medical identity cards for all are being considered by the Ministry of Health. People would be asked to carry them always.

The card would contain details such as vaccinations, owner's blood group, and of any disease, such as hemophilia, that should be known immediately if the person is involved in an accident.

One of the aims is to help quick treatment in an emergency and to avoid the dangers of injecting people with vaccine to which they might be allergic.³⁰

It may be added that there appears to be an increasing number of work establishments which require the individual to wear, and if not wear then possess on person, employee identification cards with photographs.

The whole point of these various identification devices is, of course, that they allow no innocent error or ambiguity, transforming what would be merely a questionable use of socially informing symbols into clear-cut forgery or illegal possession; therefore the term identity document might be more accurate than identity symbol. (Compare, for example, the relatively loose basis for identification of Jewish identity through appearance, gesture, and voice.)³¹ Incidentally, this documentation and the social facts attached thereto are often presented only in special situations to those specially authorized to check up on identity, unlike prestige and stigma symbols, which are more likely to be available to the public at large.

Because information about personal identity often is of the kind that can be strictly documented, it can be used to safeguard against potential misrepresentation of social identity.

³⁰ Reported in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 14, 1963, and attributed to *The London Times*.

³¹ L. Savitz and R. Tomasson, "The Identifiability of Jews," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXIV (1959), 468-475.

Thus, army personnel may be required to carry identity documents validating the potentially false claims of their uniform and its insignia. The student's personal identification card assures the librarian that he is vested with the right to borrow library books or to enter the stacks, just as his driver's license can attest that he is of legal age for drinking in commercial establishments. So, too, credit cards attest on the surface to personal identity, useful in deciding whether to give or to withhold credit, but in addition attest to the individual's being of a social category to warrant such accrediting. A man proves he is Dr. Hiram Smith to prove he is a doctor, perhaps rarely showing he is a doctor to prove he is Hiram Smith. Similarly, individuals excluded from some hotels on the basis of their ethnicity may have been ethnically identified through their names, so that here, too, an item of personal biography is exploited for categorical reasons.

In general, then, biography attached to documented identity can place clear limitations on the way in which an individual can elect to present himself; the situation of some British ex-mental patients who cannot pass as ordinary job applicants at the Employment Exchange because their National Insurance cards have unstamped gaps, provides an illustration.³² I might add that the act of concealing personal identity can itself carry implications regarding social category: the sun glasses that celebrities employ to conceal their personal identity presumably reveal, or did for a time, a social categorization of someone who wants to be incognito and would otherwise be recognized.

Once the difference between social symbols and identity documents is perceived, one can go on to look at the special position of oral statements which attest linguistically, not merely expressively, to social and personal identity. Where an individual has insufficient documentation to receive a desired service, he can be seen to attempt use of oral testaments in its place. Groups and societies differ, of course, in their beliefs as to how much

³² E. Mills, *Living with Mental Illness: A Study in East London* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962), p. 112.

identity testament is appropriate in roughly equivalent social situations. Thus, an Indian writer suggests:

In our society a man is always what his designation makes him, therefore we are very punctilious in giving it. At parties in Delhi I see people adding it themselves when the introducers omit to announce it. One day, at the house of a foreign diplomat in Delhi, a young man was introduced to me without his official position being mentioned. He immediately bowed and added, "Of the X-Ministry, and what Department are you from?" When I replied that I belonged to none, he seemed to be as much surprised by the fact that I had been invited there at all as by my not having a designation.³³

Biography

Whether an individual's biographical life line is sustained in the minds of his intimates or in the personnel files of an organization, and whether the documentation of his personal identity is carried on his person or stored in files, he is an entity about which a record can be built up—a copybook has been made ready for him to blot. He is anchored as an object for biography.³⁴

While the biography has been used by social scientists, especially in the form of a career life history, little attention has been given to the general properties of the concept, except in noting that biographies are very subject to retrospective construction. Social role as a concept and as a formal element of social organization has been thoroughly examined, but biography has not.

The first point to note about biographies is that we assume that an individual can really have only one of them, this being guaranteed by the laws of physics rather than those of society. Anything and everything an individual has done and can actually do is understood to be containable within his biography, as the Jekyll-Hyde theme illustrates, even if we have to hire a

³³ C. Chaudhuri, *A Passage to England* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1959), p. 92.

³⁴ I am very much indebted here to Harold Garfinkel, who introduced me to the term "biography" as used in this book.

biography specialist, a private detective, to fill in the missing facts and connect the discovered ones for us. No matter how big a scoundrel a man is, no matter how false, secretive, or disjointed his existence, or how governed by fits, starts, and reversals, the true facts of his activity cannot be contradictory or unconnected with each other. Note that this embracing singleness of life line is in sharp contrast to the multiplicity of selves one finds in the individual in looking at him from the perspective of social role, where, if role and audience segregation is well managed, he can quite handily sustain different selves and can to a degree claim to be no longer something he was.

Given these assumptions about the nature of personal identity, a factor emerges that will be relevant for this report: degree of "informational connectedness." Given the important social facts about a person, the kind of facts reported in his obituary, how close to each other or how distant is a given pair of them as measured by the frequency with which those who know either fact will also know the other? More generally, given the body of important social facts about the individual, in what degree do those who know some know many?

Social misrepresentation is to be distinguished from personal misrepresentation; an upper middle class businessman who takes off for a lost weekend by "dressing down" and going to a cheap summer resort misrepresents himself in the first way; when he registers in a motel as Mr. Smith he misrepresents himself in the second way. And whether social or personal identity is involved, one can distinguish representation aimed at proving one is what one isn't, from representation aimed at proving one is not what one is.

In general, norms regarding social identity, as earlier implied, pertain to the kinds of role repertoires or profiles we feel it permissible for any given individual to sustain—"social personality," as Lloyd Warner used to say.³⁵ We do not expect a pool shark to be either a woman or a classical scholar, but we are not sur-

³⁵ W. L. Warner, "The Society, the Individual, and His Mental Disorder," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, XCIV (1937), 278-279.

prised or embarrassed by the fact that he is also a working class Italian or an urban Negro. Norms regarding *personal* identity, however, pertain not to ranges of permissible combinations of social attributes but rather to the kind of information control the individual can appropriately exert. For the individual to have had what is called a shady past is an issue regarding his social identity; the way he handles information about this past is a question of personal identification. Possession of a strange past (not strange in itself, of course, but strange for someone of the individual's current social identity) is one kind of impropriety; for the possessor to live out a life before those who are ignorant of this past and not informed about it by him can be a very different kind of impropriety, the first having to do with our rules regarding social identity, the second with those regarding personal identity.

Apparently in middle class circles today, the more there is about the individual that deviates in an undesirable direction from what might have been expected to be true of him, the more he is obliged to volunteer information about himself, even though the cost to him of candor may have increased proportionately. (On the other hand, the concealment by one individual of something he should have revealed about himself does not give us the right to ask him the kind of question that will force him to disclose the facts or tell a knowing lie. When we do ask such a question a double embarrassment results, ours for being tactless, his for what he has concealed. He can also feel badly about having put us in a position to feel guilty about embarrassing him.) Here, the right to reticence seems earned only by having nothing to hide.³⁶ It also seems that in order to handle his personal identity it will be necessary for the individual to know to whom he owes much information and to whom he owes very little—even though in all cases he may be obliged to refrain from telling an “outright” lie. By implication it will also be

³⁶ For a sharp contrast, compare the code in the Old West, where apparently one's past and one's original name were defined as rightful private property. See, for example, R. Adams, *The Old-Time Cowboy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 60.

necessary for him to have a “memory,” that is, in this case, an accurate and ready accounting in his own mind regarding the facts of his present and past which he might owe to others.³⁷

The bearing of personal identification and social identification upon each other must now be considered, and an attempt made to unravel some of the more apparent intertwinings.

It is plain that in constructing a personal identification of an individual we make use of aspects of his social identity—along with everything else that can be associated with him. It is also plain that being able to identify an individual personally gives us a memory device for organizing and consolidating information regarding his social identity—a process which may subtly alter the meaning of the social characteristics we impute to him.

It can be assumed that the possession of a discreditable secret failing takes on a deeper meaning when the persons to whom the individual has not yet revealed himself are not strangers to him but friends. Discovery prejudices not only the current social situation, but established relationships as well; not only the current image others present have of him, but also the one they will have in the future; not only appearances, but also reputation. The stigma and the effort to conceal it or remedy it become “fixed” as part of personal identity. Hence our increased willingness to chance improper behavior when wearing a mask,³⁸ or when away from home; hence the willingness of some to publish revelatory material anonymously, or to make a public appearance before a small private audience, the assumption being that the disclosure will not be connected to them personally by the public at large. An instructive example of the latter has recently been reported regarding the Mattachine Society, an organization devoted to presenting and improving the situation of homosexuals, as part of which the Society publishes a journal. Appar-

³⁷ On the social framework for memory in general, see F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

³⁸ It is not only bandits and Klansmen who wear masks to avoid recognition. At recent State of Washington crime investigation hearings, ex-dope addicts have been allowed to testify while wearing a sheet over their heads, not only to avoid public identification but also to avoid retaliation.

ently a branch office in a commercial building can be busy with public-oriented efforts, while the officers otherwise conduct themselves so that other tenants in the building remain unaware of what is being undertaken and by whom.³⁹

Biographical Others

Personal identity, like social identity, divides up the individual's world of others for him. The division is first between the knowing and the unknowing. The knowing are those who have a personal identification of the individual; they need only see him or hear his name to bring this information into play. The unknowing are those for whom the individual constitutes an utter stranger, someone of whom they have begun no personal biography.

The individual who is known about by others may or may not know that he is known about by them; they in turn may or may not know that he knows or doesn't know of their knowing about him. Further, while believing that they do not know about him, nonetheless he can never be sure. Also, if he knows they know about him, he must, in some measure at least, know about them; but if he does not know that they know about him, he may or may not know about them in regard to other matters.

All of this can be relevant apart from *how much* is or is not known, since the individual's problem in managing his social and personal identity will vary greatly according to whether or not those in his presence know of him, and, if so, whether or not he knows they know of him.

When an individual is among persons for whom he is an utter stranger, and is meaningful only in terms of his immediately apparent social identity, the great contingency for him is whether or not they will begin to build up a personal identification of him (at the least a memory of having seen him in the context conducting himself in a particular way), or whether

³⁹ J. Stearn, *The Sixth Man* (New York: McFadden Books, 1962), pp. 154-155.

they will refrain altogether from organizing and storing their knowledge about him around a personal identification, this latter being a characteristic of the fully anonymous situation. Note that while public streets in large cities provide anonymous situations for the well behaved, this anonymity is biographical; there is hardly such a thing as complete anonymity regarding social identity. It may be added that every time an individual joins an organization or a community, there is a marked change in the structure of knowledge about him—its distribution and character—and hence a change in the contingencies of information control.⁴⁰ For example, every ex-mental patient must face having formed in the hospital some acquaintances who may have to be greeted socially on the outside, leading a third person to ask, "Who was that?" More important, perhaps, he must face the unknown-about knowing, that is, persons who can personally identify him and will know, when he does not know they know, that he is "really" an ex-mental patient.

By the term *cognitive recognition*, I shall refer to the perceptual act of "placing" an individual, whether as having a particular social identity or a particular personal identity. Recognition of social identities is a well-known gate-keeping function of many servers. It is less well known that recognition of personal identities is a formal function in some organizations. In banks, for example, tellers may be expected to acquire this kind of capacity regarding customers. In British criminal circles there is, apparently, an office called "corner-man" whose incumbent takes up a post on the street near the entrance of an illicit business and, by knowing the personal identity of nearly everyone who passes, is able to warn of the approach of a suspicious character.⁴¹

Within the circle of persons who have biographical information about an individual—who are knowing in regard to him—

⁴⁰ For one case study in the control of information about self, see J. Henry, "The Formal Structure of a Psychiatric Hospital," *Psychiatry*, XVII (1954), 139-152, especially 149-150.

⁴¹ A description of the functions of the corner-man may be found in J. Phelan, *The Underworld* (London: George G. Harrap & Company, 1953), Chap. 16, pp. 175-186.

there will be a smaller circle of those who are acquainted with him "socially," whether slightly or intimately, and whether as an equal or not. As we say, they not only know "of" or "about" him, they know him "personally" as well. They will have the right and the obligation of exchanging a nod, a greeting, or a chat with him when they find themselves in the same social situation with him, this constituting *social recognition*. Of course, there will be times when an individual extends social recognition to, or receives it from, an individual he does not know personally. In any case, it should be clear that cognitive recognition is simply an act of perception, while social recognition is one individual's part in a communication ceremony.

Social acquaintanceship or personal knowing is necessarily reciprocal, although of course one or even both of the acquainted persons can temporarily forget they are acquainted, just as one or both can be alive to the acquaintanceship but temporarily forgetful of almost everything about the other's personal identity.⁴²

For the individual who lives a village life, whether in town or city, there will be few who merely know of him; those that know about him are likely to know him personally. In contrast, by the term "fame" we seem to refer to the possibility that the circle of people who know about a given individual, especially in connection with a rare desirable achievement or possession, can become very wide, and at the same time much wider than the circle of those who know him personally.

The treatment accorded an individual on the basis of his social identity is often accorded with added deference and indulgence to a famed person because of his personal identity. Like a small-town person, he will always be shopping where he is known. The mere fact of being cognitively recognized in public places by strangers can also be a source of satisfaction, as a young actor suggests:

⁴² Further treatment of acquaintanceship and types of recognition may be found in E. Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), Chap. 7, pp. 112-123.

When I first became a little well-known and had a day when I was feeling down, I'd actually say to myself, "Well, I think I'll go out for a walk and be recognized."⁴³

This kind of promiscuous minor acclaim presumably provides one reason why fame is sought; it also suggests why fame once obtained is sometimes hidden from. The issue is not only the nuisance in being chased by reporters, autograph hunters, and turned heads, but also that a widened range of acts become assimilated to biography as newsworthy events. For a famous person to "get away" where he can "be himself" may mean his finding a community in which there is no biography of him; here his conduct, reflecting merely on his social identity, can have a chance of being of interest to no one. Contrariwise, one aspect of being "on" is acting in a fashion designed to control implications for biography, but doing this in what are ordinarily non-biography creating areas of life.

In the everyday life of an average person there will be long stretches of time when events involving him will be memorable to no one, a technical but not active part of his biography. Only a serious personal accident or the witnessing of a murder will create moments during these dead periods which have a place in the reviews he and others come to make of his past. (An "alibi," in fact, is a presented piece of biography that ordinarily would not have become part of one's active biography at all.) On the other hand, notables who come to have a book-length biography written about them, and especially those such as royalty who are known from the start to be destined for this fate, will find they have experienced few periods of life which are allowed to remain dead, that is, inactively part of their biography.

When considering fame it can be useful and convenient to consider ill-fame or infamy, this arising when there is a circle of persons who know ill of an individual without having met him

⁴³ Anthony Perkins, in L. Ross, "The Player-III," *The New Yorker* (Nov. 4, 1961) 88.

personally. The obvious function of ill-fame is social control, of which two distinct possibilities must be mentioned:

Formal social control is the first. There are functionaries, and circles of functionaries, employed to scan various publics for the presence of identifiable individuals whose record and reputation have made them suspect, or even "wanted" for arrest. For example, during a mental hospital study, I knew a patient who had "town parole" and also a record of having molested very young girls. On entering any of the neighboring movie houses he was likely to be spotted by the manager and made to leave. He was, in short, too ill-famed to attend movies in the neighborhood. Well-known "hoods" have had the same problem, but on a scale larger than could be effected by theater managers.

It is here that one deals with further examples of the occupation of making personal identifications. Floorwalkers in stores, for example, sometimes have extensive records of the appearance of professional shoplifters along with that identity peg called the *modus operandi*. The production of personal identification may in fact be accorded a social occasion of its own, as in the police line-up. Dickens, in describing the social mixing of prisoners and visitors in a London jail, provides another example, called "sitting for one's portrait," whereby a new prisoner was obliged to sit in a chair while the guards gathered and looked at him, fixing his image in their minds so as to be able to spot him later.⁴⁴

Functionaries whose job is to check up on the possible presence of the ill-reputed may operate in the public at large instead of in particular social establishments, as in the case of police detectives who range over a whole city, but do not themselves constitute this public. One is led then to consider a second type of social control based on ill-fame, but this time an informal type of control involving the public at large; and this time the famed can be seen to be in much the same position as the ill-famed.

It is possible for the circle of those who know of an individual

⁴⁴ *Pickwick Papers*, Vol. III, Chap. 2.

(but are not known by him) to include the public at large, not merely those employed to make identifications. (In fact the terms "fame" and "ill-fame" imply that the citizenry at large must possess an image of the individual.) No doubt the mass media play the central role here, making it possible for a "private" person to be transformed into a "public" figure.

Now it seems the case that the public image of an individual, that is, the image of him available to those who do not know him personally, will necessarily be somewhat different from the image he projects through direct dealings with those who know him personally. Where an individual has a public image, it seems to be constituted from a small selection of facts which may be true of him, which facts are inflated into a dramatic and newsworthy appearance, and then used as a full picture of him. In consequence a special type of stigmatization can occur. The figure the individual cuts in daily life before those with whom he has routine dealings is likely to be dwarfed and spoiled by virtual demands (whether favorable or unfavorable) created by his public image. This seems especially to occur when the individual is no longer engaged in newsworthy larger events and must everywhere face being received as someone who no longer is what he once was; it seems also likely to occur when notoriety is acquired due to a brief and uncharacteristic, accidental event which exposes the individual to public identification without providing him any compensating claim to desired attributes.⁴⁵

An implication of these comments is that the famous and the infamous may have more in common than either has with what headwaiters and gossip columnists call "nobodies," for whether a crowd wants to show love or hate for an individual, the same disruption of his ordinary movements can occur. (This type of lack of anonymity is to be contrasted to the type based on social

⁴⁵ In law, efforts of an individual to remain a private citizen or regain that status have come to form part of the question of privacy. A useful review may be found in M. Ernst and A. Schwartz, *Privacy: The Right to Be Let Alone* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).

identity, as when an individual with a physical deformity feels he is being constantly stared at.) Infamous hangmen and famous actors have both found it expedient to board a train at an unanticipated station or to wear a disguise;⁴⁶ individuals may even find themselves using stratagems to escape hostile public attention that they also used at an earlier time in their story to escape adulatory attention. In any case, readily accessible information about the management of personal identity is to be found in the biographies and autobiographies of famous and infamous people.

An individual, then, may be seen as the central point in a distribution of persons who either merely know about him or know him personally, all of whom may have somewhat different amounts of information concerning him. Let me repeat that although the individual's daily round will routinely bring him into contact with individuals who know him differently, these differences will ordinarily not be incompatible; in fact, some kind of single biographical structure will be sustained. A man's relationship to his boss and his relationship to his child may be vastly different, so that he cannot easily play the part of employee while playing the part of father, but should the man, while walking with his child, meet his boss, a greeting and introduction will be possible without either the child or the boss radically reorganizing their personal identification of the man—both having known of the existence and role of the other. The well-established etiquette of the "courtesy introduction," in fact, assumes that the person we have a role relation to quite properly has other kinds of relationships to other kinds of persons. I assume, then, that the apparently haphazard contacts of everyday life may still constitute some kind of structure holding the individual to one biography, and this in spite of the multiplicity of selves that role and audience segregation allow him.

⁴⁶ See J. Atholl, *op. cit.*, Chap. 5, "The Public and the Press." On the famed avoiding contacts, see J. Bainbridge, *Garbo* (New York: Dell, 1961), especially pp. 205-206. On a current technique—the use of disguising wigs by movie stars who have their own hair—see L. Lieber, "Hollywood's Going Wig Wacky," *This Week*, Feb. 18, 1962.

Passing

It is apparent that if a stigmatizing affliction possessed by an individual is known to no one, including himself, as in the case, say, of someone with undiagnosed leprosy or unrecognized *petit mal* seizures, then the sociologist has no interest in it, except as a control device for learning about the "primary"⁴⁷ or objective implications of the stigma. Where the stigma is nicely invisible and known only to the person who possesses it, who tells no one, then here again is a matter of minor concern in the study of passing. The extent to which either of these two possibilities exists is of course hard to assess.

In a similar way, it should be clear that if a stigma were always immediately apparent to any and all persons with whom an individual had contact, then one's interest would be limited, too, although there would be some interest in the question of how much an individual can cut himself off from contact and still be allowed to function freely in society, in the question of tact and its breakdown, and in the question of self-derogation.

It is apparent, however, that these two extremes, where no one knows about the stigma and where everyone knows, fail to cover a great range of cases. First, there are important stigmas, such as the ones that prostitutes, thieves, homosexuals, beggars, and drug addicts have, which require the individual to be carefully secret about his failing to one class of persons, the police, while systematically exposing himself to other classes of persons, namely, clients, fellow-members, connections, fences, and the like.⁴⁸ Thus, no matter what role tramps assume in the presence of the police, they often have to declare themselves to housewives in order to obtain a free meal, and may even have to expose their status to passers-by because of being served on back porches what they understandably call "exhibition meals."⁴⁹ Secondly, even where an individual could keep an unapparent

⁴⁷ In the sense introduced by Lemert, *Social Pathology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 ff.

⁴⁸ See T. Hirshi, "The Professional Prostitute," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, VII (1962), 36.

⁴⁹ E. Kane, "The Jargon of the Underworld," *Dialect Notes*, V (1927), 445.

stigma secret, he will find that intimate relations with others, ratified in our society by mutual confession of invisible failings, cause him either to admit his situation to the intimate or to feel guilty for not doing so. In any case, nearly all matters which are very secret are still known to someone, and hence cast a shadow.

Similarly, there are many cases where it appears that an individual's stigma will always be apparent, but where this proves to be not quite the case; for on examination one finds that the individual will occasionally be in a position to elect to conceal crucial information about himself. For example, while a lame boy may seem always to present himself as such, strangers can momentarily assume that he has been in a temporarily incapacitating accident,⁵⁰ just as a blind person led into a dark cab by a friend may find for a moment that sight has been imputed to her,⁵¹ or a blind man wearing dark glasses sitting in a dark bar may be taken as a seeing person by a newcomer,⁵² or a double hand-amputee with hooks watching a movie may cause a sexually forward female sitting next to him to scream in terror over what her hand has suddenly found.⁵³ Similarly, black skinned Negroes who have never passed publicly may nonetheless find themselves, in writing letters or making telephone calls, projecting an image of self that is subject to later discrediting.

Given these several possibilities that fall between the extremes of complete secrecy on one hand and complete information on the other, it would seem that the problems people face who make a concerted and well-organized effort to pass are problems that wide ranges of persons face at some time or other. Because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in a position to pass will do so on some occasion by intent. Further, the individual's stigma may relate to matters which cannot be appropriately divulged to strangers. An ex-convict, for example, can only disclose his stigma widely by im-

⁵⁰ F. Davis, "Polio in the Family: A Study in Crisis and Family Process," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958, p. 236.

⁵¹ Davis, "Deviance Disavowal," *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁵² S. Rigman, *Second Sight* (New York: David McKay, 1959), p. 101.

⁵³ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

properly presuming on mere acquaintances, orally disclosing to them personal facts about himself which are more personal than the relationship really warrants. A conflict between candor and seemliness will often be resolved in favor of the latter. Finally, when the stigma relates to parts of the body that the normally qualified must themselves conceal in public places, then passing is inevitable, whether desired or not. A woman who has had a mastectomy or a Norwegian male sex offender who has been penalized by castration are forced to present themselves falsely in almost all situations, having to conceal their unconventional secrets because of everyone's having to conceal the conventional ones.

When an individual in effect or by intent passes, it is possible for a discrediting to occur because of what becomes apparent about him, apparent even to those who socially identify him solely on the basis of what is available to any stranger in the social situation. (Thus arises one variety of what is called "an embarrassing incident.") But this kind of threat to virtual social identity is certainly not the only kind. Apart from the fact that the individual's current actions can discredit his current pretensions, a basic contingency in passing is that he will be discovered by those who can personally identify him and who include in their biographical record of him unapparent facts that are incompatible with present claims. It is then, incidentally, that personal identification bears strongly on social identity.

Here, of course, is the basis of the varieties of blackmail. There is the "frame-up," this consisting of the engineering of a happening now that can be used as a basis of blackmail shortly. (A frame-up is to be distinguished from "entrapment," an art detectives practice to cause criminals to reveal their habitual criminal practices and thus their criminal identity.) There is "pre-blackmail," where the victim is forced to continue in a course of action because of the blackmailer's warning that any change will lead him to disclose facts making the change untenable. W. I. Thomas cites an actual case in which a policeman forces a prostitute to remain in her lucrative calling by system-

atically discrediting her attempts to obtain employment as a well-reputed girl.⁵⁴ There is “self-saving blackmail,” perhaps the most important kind, where the blackmailer, by intent or in effect, avoids paying an earned penalty because enforcing payment would result in the creditor’s discrediting.

The “presumption of innocence until guilt is proven” provides far less protection for the unwed mother than for the unmarried father. Her guilt is made obvious by a protruding profile—evidence hard to conceal. He bears no outward signs, and his accessory role must be proved. But to provide such a proof, when the state does not assume the initiative in establishing paternity, the unwed mother must disclose her identity and sexual misbehavior to a larger audience. Her reluctance to do this makes it fairly easy for her male accomplice to maintain his anonymity and his ostensible innocence, if he chooses.⁵⁵

Finally, there is “full” or classic blackmail, the blackmailer obtaining payments by threatening to disclose facts about the individual’s past or present which could utterly discredit his currently sustained identity. It may be noted that all full blackmail includes the self-saving kind, since the successful blackmailer, in addition to obtaining the blackmail, also avoids the penalty attached to blackmailing.

Sociologically, blackmail itself may not be very important;⁵⁶ it is more important to consider the kinds of relations an individual can have to those who could, if they wanted to, blackmail him. It is here that one sees that a person who passes leads a double life, and that the informational connectedness of biography can allow for different modes of double living.

⁵⁴ *The Unadjusted Girl* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1923), pp. 144-145.

⁵⁵ E. Clark, *Unmarried Mothers* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 4.

⁵⁶ Given the profusion of skeletons in people’s closets, it is a wonder that full blackmail is not more prevalent. The legal sanction is of course high, making the practice uncompetitive in many cases, but one still has to explain why the legal sanction is so high. Perhaps the rarity of the act and the strong sanction against it are both expressions of the distaste we have for work requiring us to confront unwilling others with greatly discrediting facts about themselves, this knowledge to be then pressed against their interests.

When the discreditable fact about an individual is in the past, he will be concerned not so much about original sources of evidence and information as about persons who can relay what they have already gathered. When the discreditable fact is part of current life, then he must guard against more than relayed information; he must guard against getting directly caught in the act, as a call girl suggests:

Exposure was possible without arrest, and equally painful. “I always look around a room fast when I go to parties,” she said. “You never know. Once I ran smack into two of my cousins. They were with a couple of call girls and didn’t even nod to me. I took my cue—hoping they were too busy thinking of themselves to wonder about me. I always wondered what I would do if I ran into my father, since he was around quite a bit.”⁵⁷

If there is something discreditable about an individual’s past or present, it would seem that the precariousness of his position will vary directly with the number of persons who are in on the secret; the more who know about his shady side the more treacherous his situation. Hence it may be safer for a bank teller to dally with his wife’s girlfriend than to go to the races

Whether those in the know are many or few, there is here a simple double life containing those who think they know the whole man and those who “really” do so. This possibility must be contrasted to the situation of the individual who lives a double double life, moving in two circles each of which is unaware that the other exists with its own and different biography of him. A man carrying on an affair, with perhaps a small number of individuals knowing that this is so and even associating with the illicit couple, is carrying on a single double life. However, should the illicit couple begin to make friends who are unaware that the couple are really not a couple, a double double life begins to emerge. The danger in the first type of double living is that of blackmail or malicious disclosure; the

⁵⁷ Stearn, *Sisters of the Night*, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.

danger in the second type, the greater, perhaps, is that of inadvertent disclosure, since none of those who knows the couple will be oriented to maintaining the secret, being unaware that there is one to keep.

I have considered so far a currently sustained life that is threatened by what some others know about the individual's past or about the shady parts of his present. Now another perspective on double living must be considered.

When an individual leaves a community after residing there for some years, he leaves a personal identification behind, often with a well-rounded biography attached, including assumptions as to how he is likely to "end up." In his current community the individual will develop a biography in others' minds too, potentially a full portrait including a version of the kind of person he used to be and the background out of which he came. Obviously, a discrepancy may arise between these two sets of knowings about him; something like a double biography can develop, with those who knew him when and those who know him now each thinking that they know the whole man.

Often this biographical discontinuity is bridged by his affording accurate and adequate information about his past to those in his present, and by those in his past bringing their biographies of him up to date through news and gossip about him. This bridging is eased when what he has become is not a discredit upon what he was, and when what he was does not discredit too much what he has become, which of course is the usual state of affairs. In brief, there will be discontinuities in his biography but not discrediting ones.

Now while students are sufficiently alive to the effect on the individual's present of having had a blameworthy past, insufficient attention has been given to the effect upon his earlier biographers of a blameworthy present. There has been insufficient appreciation of the importance to an individual of preserving a good memory of himself among those with whom he no longer lives, even though this fact fits nicely into what is called reference group theory. The classic case here is that of the prosti-

tute who, although adjusted to her urban round and the contacts she routinely has in it, fears to "bump into" a man from her home town who will of course be able to discern her present social attributes and bring the news back home.⁵⁸ In this case her closet is as big as her beat, and she is the skeleton that resides in it. This sentimental concern with those with whom we no longer have actual dealings provides one of the penalties of taking on an immoral occupation, illustrated in Park's comment that it is bums, not bankers, who decline to have their pictures in the paper, a modesty due to fear of being recognized by someone from home.

In the literature there is some suggestion of a natural cycle of passing.⁵⁹ The cycle may start with unwitting passing that the passer never learns he is engaging in; move from there to unintended passing that the surprised passer learns about in mid-passage; from there to passing "for fun"; passing during non-routine parts of the social round, such as vacations and travel; passing during routine daily occasions, such as at work or in service establishments; finally, "disappearance"—complete passing over in all areas of life, the secret being known only to the passer himself. It may be noted that when relatively complete passing is essayed, the individual sometimes consciously arranges his own *rite de passage*, going to another city, holing up in a room for a few days with preselected clothing and cosmetics he has brought with him, and then, like a butterfly, emerging

⁵⁸ See, for example, *Street-Walker* (New York: Dell, 1961), pp. 194-196. Although there is ample fictional, and even some case-history, material on prostitutes, there is very little material of any kind on pimps. (But see, for example, C. MacInnes, *Mr. Love and Justice* [London: The New English Library, 1962]; and J. Murtagh and S. Harris, *Cast the First Stone* [New York: Pocket Books, 1958], Chaps. 8 and 9.) This is a great pity, since there is perhaps no male occupation about which its performers are more bashful. The daily round of the pimp must be full of passing dodges not yet recorded. Further, only with the greatest difficulty can pimps be tactfully told to their faces what their occupation is. Here is a good opportunity, then, to gather material on the situation of the discredited as well as the discreditable.

⁵⁹ See H. Cayton and S. Drake, *Black Metropolis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), "A Rose by Any Other Name," pp. 159-171. I am indebted here to an unpublished paper by Gary Marx.

to try the brand new wings.⁶⁰ At any phase, of course, there can be a break in the cycle and a return to the fold.

If it is not possible at this time to speak of such a cycle with any assurance, and if it is necessary to suggest that some discreditable attributes preclude the final phases of the cycle, it is at least possible to look for various points of stability in passing penetration; certainly it is possible to see that the extent of passing can vary, from momentary and unintended at one extreme to the classic kind of deliberate total passing.

Earlier, two phases in the learning process of the stigmatized person were suggested: his learning the normal point of view and learning that he is disqualified according to it. Presumably a next phase consists of his learning to cope with the way others treat the kind of person he can be shown to be. A still later phase is now my concern, namely, learning to pass.

Where a differentness is relatively unapparent, the individual must learn that in fact he can trust himself to secrecy. The point of view of observers of himself must be entered carefully, but not anxiously carried further than the observers themselves do. Starting with a feeling that everything known to himself is known to others, he often develops a realistic appreciation that this is not so. For example, it is reported that marihuana smokers slowly learn that when "high" they can function in the immediate presence of those who know them well, without these others discovering anything—a learning that apparently helps to transform an occasional user into a regular one.⁶¹ Similarly, there are records of girls who, having just lost their virginity, examine themselves in the mirror to see if their stigma shows, only slowly coming to believe that in fact they look no different from the way they used to.⁶² A parallel can be cited regarding the experience of a male after his first overt homosexual experience:

⁶⁰ See, for the passage from Negro to white, R. Lee, *I Passed for White* (New York: David McKay, 1955), pp. 89-92; from white to Negro, J. H. Griffin, *Black Like Me* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 6-13.

⁶¹ H. Becker, "Marihuana Use and Social Control," *Social Problems*, III (1955), 40.

⁶² H. M. Hughes, ed., *The Fantastic Lodge* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 40.

"Did it [his first homosexual experience] bother you later?" I asked.

"Oh no, I only worried about somebody finding out. I was afraid my mother and dad could tell by looking at me. But they acted like always, and I began to feel confident and secure once more."⁶³

It may be suggested that, due to social identity, the individual with a secret differentness will find himself during the daily and weekly round in three possible kinds of places. There will be forbidden or out-of-bounds places, where persons of the kind he can be shown to be are forbidden to be, and where exposure means expulsion—an eventuality often so unpleasant to all parties that a tacit cooperation will sometimes forestall it, the interloper providing a thin disguise and the rightfully present accepting it, even though both know the other knows of the interloping. There are civil places, where persons of the individual's kind, when known to be of his kind, are carefully, and sometimes painfully, treated as if they were not disqualified for routine acceptance, when in fact they somewhat are. Finally, there are back places, where persons of the individual's kind stand exposed and find they need not try to conceal their stigma, nor be overly concerned with cooperatively trying to disattend it. In some cases this license arises from having chosen the company of those with the same or a similar stigma. For example, it is said that carnivals provide physically handicapped employees with a world in which their stigma is relatively little an issue.⁶⁴ In other cases, the back place may be involuntarily created as a result of individuals being herded together administratively against their will on the basis of a common stigma. It might be added that whether the individual enters a back place voluntarily or involuntarily, the place is likely to provide an atmosphere of special piquancy. Here the individual will be able to be at ease among his fellows and also discover that acquaintances he thought were

⁶³ Stearn, *The Sixth Man*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁶⁴ H. Viscardi, Jr., *A Laughter in the Lonely Night* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1961), p. 309.

not of his own kind really are. However, as the following citation suggests, he will also run the risk of being easily discredited should a normal person known from elsewhere enter the place.

A 17-year-old Mexican-American boy was committed to the hospital [for the mentally retarded] by the courts as a mental defective. He strongly rejected this definition, claiming that there was nothing wrong with him and that he wanted to go to a more "respectable" detention center for juvenile delinquents. Sunday morning, a few days after he arrived at the hospital, he was being taken to church with several other patients. By an unfortunate circumstance, his girl friend was visiting the hospital that morning with a friend whose infant brother was a patient at the hospital, and was walking toward him. When he saw her she had not yet seen him and he did not intend for her to do so. He turned from her and fled as fast as he could run, until overtaken by employees who thought he had gone berserk. When questioned about this behavior he explained that his girl friend did not know he was "in this place for dummies" and he could not bear the humiliation of being seen in the hospital as a patient.⁶⁵

The beat of a prostitute constitutes for her the same kind of threat:

It was this aspect of this social situation that I experienced when I visited the carriage roads in Hyde Park [a female social researcher states]. The deserted appearance of the footpaths and the apparent purposefulness of any woman who did walk along them were not only sufficient to announce my purpose to the public, they also forced upon me the realization that this area was reserved for prostitutes—it was a place set aside for them and would lend its colouring to anyone who chose to enter it—. . .⁶⁶

This partitioning of the individual's world into forbidden, civil, and back places establishes the going price for revealing or concealing and the significance of being known about or not known about, whatever his choice of information strategies.

Just as the individual's world is divided up spatially by his

⁶⁵ Edgerton and Sabagh, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

⁶⁶ Rolph, *Women of the Streets, op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

social identity, so also is it divided up by his personal identity. There are places where, as is said, he is known personally: either some of those present are likely to know him personally or the individual in charge of the area (hostess, maitre de, bartender, and the like) knows him personally, in either case assuring that his having been present there will be demonstrable later. Secondly, there are places where he can expect with some confidence not to "bump into" anyone who knows him personally, and where (barring the special contingencies faced by the famed and ill-famed, whom many persons know of without knowing personally) he can expect to remain anonymous, eventful to no one. Whether or not it is embarrassing to his personal identity to be in a place where, incidentally, he is known personally will vary of course with the circumstances, especially with the question of whom he is "with."

Given that the individual's spatial world will be divided into different regions according to the contingencies embedded in them for the management of social and personal identity, one can go on to consider some of the problems and consequences of passing. This consideration will partly overlap with folk wisdom; cautionary tales concerning the contingencies of passing form part of the morality we employ to keep people in their places.

He who passes finds unanticipated needs to disclose discrediting information about himself, as when a wife of a mental patient tries to collect her husband's unemployment insurance or a "married" homosexual tries to insure his house and finds he must try to explain his peculiar choice of beneficiary.⁶⁷ He also suffers from "in-deeper-ism," that is, pressure to elaborate a lie further and further to prevent a given disclosure.⁶⁸ His adaptive techniques can themselves give rise to hurt feelings and misunderstandings on the part of others.⁶⁹ His effort to conceal incapacitates

⁶⁷ Suggested by Evelyn Hooker in conversation.

⁶⁸ In regard to concealing mental hospital commitment of spouse, see Yarrow, Clausen, and Robbins, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁶⁹ On the deaf being inadvertently gauche and snobbish, see R. G. Barker *et al.*, *Adjustment to Physical Handicap and Illness* (New York: Social Science Research Council Bulletin No. 55, revised, 1953), pp. 193-194.

ties may cause him to display other ones or give the appearance of doing so: slovenliness, as when a near-blind person, affecting to see, trips over a stool, or spills drink down his shirt; inattentiveness, stubbornness, woodenness, or distance, as when a hard of hearing person fails to respond to a remark proffered him by someone ignorant of his shortcoming; sleepiness, as when a teacher perceives a student's *petit mal* epilepsy seizure as momentary daydreaming;⁷⁰ drunkenness, as when a man with cerebral palsy finds that his gait is always being misinterpreted.⁷¹ Further, he who passes leaves himself open to learning what others "really" think of persons of his kind, both when they do not know they are dealing with someone of his kind and when they start out not knowing but learn part way through the encounter and sharply veer to another course. He finds himself not knowing how far information about himself has gone, this being a problem whenever his boss or schoolteacher is dutifully informed of his stigma, but others are not. As suggested, he can become subject to blackmail of various kinds by persons who know of his secret and do not have good reason for keeping quiet about it.

He who passes can also suffer the classic and central experience of exposure during face-to-face interaction, betrayed by the very weakness he is trying to hide, by the others present, or by impersonal circumstances. The situation of the stutterer is an example:

We who stutter speak only when we must. We hide our defect, often so successfully that our intimates are surprised when in an unguarded moment, a word suddenly runs away with our tongues and we blurt and blat and grimace and choke until finally the spasm is over and we open our eyes to view the wreckage.⁷²

⁷⁰ S. Livingston, *Living With Epileptic Seizures* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1963), p. 32.

⁷¹ Henrich and Kriegel, *op. cit.*, p. 101; see also p. 157.

⁷² C. van Riper, *Do You Stutter?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939), p. 601, in von Hentig, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

The epileptic subject to *grand mal* seizures provides a more extreme case; he may regain consciousness to find that he has been lying on a public street, incontinent, moaning, and jerking convulsively—a discrediting of sanity that is eased only slightly by his not being conscious during some of the episode.⁷³ I might add that the lore of every stigmatized grouping seems to have its own battery of cautionary tales of embarrassing exposure, and that most members seem able to provide examples from their own experiences.

Finally, he who passes can find himself called to a showdown by persons who have now learned of his secret and are about to confront him with his having been false. This possibility can even be formally instituted, as in mental health hearings and the following:

Doreen, a Mayfair girl, says that court appearances are "about the worst part of it [i.e., prostitution]. You go in through that door and everyone's waiting for you and looking at you. I keep my head down and never look on either side. Then they say those awful words: 'Being a common prostitute . . .' and you feel awful, all the time not knowing who's watching you at the back of the court. You say 'guilty' and get out as soon as you can."⁷⁴

The presence of fellow-sufferers (or the wise) introduces a special set of contingencies in regard to passing, since the very techniques used to conceal stigmas may give the show away to someone who is familiar with the tricks of the trade, the assumption being that it takes one (or those close to him) to know one:

"Why don't you try a chiropractor?" she [a casual acquaintance] asked me, chewing corned beef, giving no slightest indication that she was about to knock the bottom out of my world. "Dr. Fletcher told me he's curing one of his patients of deafness."

My heart skittered, in panic, against my ribs. What did she mean?

⁷³ Livingston, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 ff.

⁷⁴ Rolph, *Women of the Streets*, *op. cit.*, p. 24. For a general statement, see H. Garfinkel, "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXI (1956), 420-424.

"My dad's deaf," she revealed. "I can spot a deaf person anywhere. That soft voice of yours. And that trick of letting your sentences trail off—not finishing them. Dad does that all the time."⁷⁵

These contingencies help to explain the ambivalence previously mentioned that the individual may feel when confronted with his own kind. As Wright suggests:

. . . a person who wishes to conceal his disability will notice disability-revealing mannerisms in another person. Moreover, he is likely to resent those mannerisms that advertise the fact of disability, for in wishing to conceal his disability he wishes others to conceal theirs. Thus it is that the person who is hard of hearing and who strives to hide this fact will be annoyed at the old woman who cups her hand behind her ear. Flaunting disability is a threat to him because it stirs up the guilt of having scorned his own group membership as well as the possibility of his own exposure. He may prefer surreptitiously to realize the other person's secret and to maintain a gentlemen's agreement that both should play their "as if" roles to having the other person challenge his pretense by confiding his own.⁷⁶

Control of identity information has a special bearing on relationships. Relationships can necessitate time spent together, and the more time the individual spends with another the more chance the other will acquire discrediting information about him. Further, as already suggested, every relationship obliges the related persons to exchange an appropriate amount of intimate facts about self, as evidence of trust and mutual commitment. Close relationships that the individual had before he came to have something to conceal therefore become compromised, automatically deficient in shared information. Newly formed or "post-stigma" relationships are very likely to carry the discreditable person past the point where he feels it has been honorable of him to withhold the facts. And, in some cases, even very fleeting relationships can constitute a danger, since the

⁷⁵ F. Warfield, *Cotton in My Ears* (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 44, in Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁷⁶ Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

small talk suitable between strangers who have struck up a conversation can touch on secret failings, as when the wife of an impotent husband must answer questions as to how many children she has and, having none, why so.⁷⁷

The phenomenon of passing has always raised issues regarding the psychic state of the passer. First, it is assumed that he must necessarily pay a great psychological price, a very high level of anxiety, in living a life that can be collapsed at any moment. A statement by a wife of a mental patient will illustrate:

. . . and suppose after George gets out everything is going well and somebody throws it up in his face. That would ruin everything. I live in terror of that—a complete terror of that.⁷⁸

I think that close study of passers would show that this anxiety is not always found and that here our folk conceptions of human nature can be seriously misleading.

Secondly, it is often assumed, and with evidence, that the passer will feel torn between two attachments. He will feel some alienation from his new "group," for he is unlikely to be able to identify fully with their attitude to what he knows he can be shown to be.⁷⁹ And presumably he will suffer feelings of disloyalty and self-contempt when he cannot take action against "offensive" remarks made by members of the category he is passing into against the category he is passing out of—especially when he himself finds it dangerous to refrain from joining in this vilification. As discreditable persons suggest:

When jokes were made about "queers" I had to laugh with the rest, and when talk was about women I had to invent conquests of my own. I hated myself at such moments, but there seemed to be nothing else that I could do. My whole life became a lie.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ "Vera Vaughan," in Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁷⁸ Yarrow, Clausen, and Robbins, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁷⁹ Riesman, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁸⁰ Wildeblood, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

The tone of voice sometimes used [by friends] to refer to spinsters would shock me, as I felt I was cheating by in fact being in the state which married people looked at askance, while having the apparent status of a married woman. I also felt somewhat dishonest with my unmarried woman friends who did not talk about these matters but eyed me with some curiosity and envy for having an experience which I did not in fact enjoy.⁸¹

Thirdly, it seems to be assumed, and apparently correctly, that he who passes will have to be alive to aspects of the social situation which others treat as uncalculated and unattended. What are unthinking routines for normals can become management problems for the discreditable.⁸² These problems cannot always be handled by past experience, since new contingencies always arise, making former concealing devices inadequate. The person with a secret failing, then, must be alive to the social situation as a scanner of possibilities, and is therefore likely to be alienated from the simpler world in which those around him apparently dwell. What is their ground is his figure. A young man who is near blind provides one example:

I managed to keep Mary from knowing my eyes were bad through two dozen sodas and three movies. I used every trick I had ever learned. I paid special attention to the color of her dress each morning, and then I would keep my eyes and ears and my sixth sense alert for anyone that might be Mary. I didn't take any chances. If I wasn't sure, I would greet whoever it was with familiarity. They probably thought I was nuts, but I didn't care. I always held her hand on the way to and from the movies at night, and she led me, without knowing it, so I didn't have to feel for curbs and steps.⁸³

A young boy with a "stricture," who cannot pass water when in the presence of others, wanting to keep his differentness a secret, finds himself having to plot and plan and be wary, where others are merely having to be boys:

⁸¹ "Vera Vaughan," in Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁸² Here, again, I am indebted to Harold Garfinkel.

⁸³ Criddle, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

When I went away to boarding school at the age of ten there were new difficulties, and new ways of dealing with them had to be found. Generally speaking, it was never a case of making water when one wanted to, but always a case of doing so when one could. I felt it necessary to keep my disability secret from the other boys, since the worst thing that can happen to a boy at his prep. school is to be in any way "different"; so I went when they did to the school latrines, though nothing happened there but the increase of my envy of my fellows' freedom to behave naturally, and even challenge one another to see how high up the wall they could reach. (I should have liked to join in, but if anyone challenged me, I had always "just finished.") I used various stratagems. One was to ask to be excused during class, when the latrines would be deserted. Another was to stay awake at night and use the pot under my bed when the dormitory's other occupants were asleep, or at least when it was dark and I could not be seen.⁸⁴

Similarly, one learns of the constant wariness of stutterers:

We have many ingenious tricks for disguising or minimizing our blocks. We look ahead for "Jonah" sounds and words, so-called because they are unlucky and we envy the whale his ease in expelling them. We dodge "Jonah" words when we can, substituting non-feared words in their places or hastily shifting our thought until the continuity of our speech becomes as involved as a plate of spaghetti.⁸⁵

And about the wife of a mental patient:

Concealment often becomes cumbersome. Thus, to keep the neighbors from knowing the husband's hospital (having reported that he was in a hospital because of suspicion of cancer), Mrs. G. must rush to her apartment to get the mail before her neighbors pick it up for her as they used to do. She has had to abandon second breakfasts at the drugstore with the women in the neighboring apartments to avoid their questions. Before she can allow visitors in her apartment, she must pick up any material identifying the hospital, and so on.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ "N. O. Goe," in Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁸⁵ Riper, *op. cit.*, p. 601, in von Hentig, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁸⁶ Yarrow, Clausen, and Robbins, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

And from a homosexual:

The strain of deceiving my family and friends often became intolerable. It was necessary for me to watch every word I spoke, and every gesture that I made, in case I gave myself away.⁸⁷

A similar scanning may be illustrated among colostomy patients:

"I never go to local movies. If I do go to the movie I select a large house like Radio City where I have greater choice of seats and can pick an end seat where I can rush to the bathroom if I have gas."⁸⁸

"When I go on a bus I pick my seat just in case. I sit on an end seat or near the door."⁸⁹

In all of this, special timing may be required. Thus, there is the practice of "living on a leash"—the Cinderella syndrome—whereby the discreditable person stays close to the place where he can refurbish his disguise, and where he can rest up from having to wear it; he moves from his repair station only that distance that he can return from without losing control over information about himself:

Since irrigation does constitute the primary defense against the occurrence of spillage, as well as representing a reparative activity of great emotional significance, patients with a colostomy frequently schedule travel and social contacts in relation to the time and effectiveness of irrigation. Travel is usually restricted to the distance which can be traversed in the interval between irrigations at home, and social contacts are limited to periods between irrigation which are believed to afford maximum protection against spillage or flatus. Patients can, therefore, be considered as living "on a leash" which is only as long as the time interval between irrigations.⁹⁰

There is a final issue to be considered. As already suggested, a child with a stigma can pass in a special way. Parents, knowing

⁸⁷ Wildeblood, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁸⁸ Orbach *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Orbach *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

of their child's stigmatic condition, may encapsulate him with domestic acceptance and ignorance of what he is going to have to become. When he ventures outdoors he does so therefore as an unwitting passer, at least to the extent that his stigma is not immediately apparent. At this point his parents are faced with a basic dilemma regarding information management, sometimes appealing to medical practitioners for strategies.⁹¹ If the child is informed about himself at school age, it is felt he may not be strong enough psychologically to bear the news, and in addition may tactlessly disclose these facts about himself to those who need not know. On the other hand, if he is kept too long in the dark, then he will not be prepared for what is to happen to him and, moreover, may be informed about his condition by strangers who have no reason to take the time and care required to present the facts in a constructive, hopeful light.

Techniques of Information Control



It has been suggested that an individual's social identity divides up the world of people and places for him, and that his personal identity does this too, although differently. It is these frames of reference one must apply in studying the daily round of a particular stigmatized person, as he wends his way to and from his place of work, his place of residence, his place of shopping, and the places where he participates in recreation. A key concept here is the daily round, for it is the daily round that links the individual to his several social situations. And one studies the daily round with a special perspective in mind. To the extent that the individual is a discredited person, one looks for the routine cycle of restrictions he faces regarding social acceptance; to the extent that he is discreditable, for the contingencies he faces in managing information about himself. For example, an individual with a facial deformity can expect, as suggested, to cease gradually to be a shocking surprise to those in his own

⁹¹ For a practitioner's version of childhood epilepsy as a problem in information control, see Livingston, *op. cit.*, "Should Epilepsy Be Publicized," pp. 201-210.

neighborhood, and there he can obtain a small measure of acceptance; at the same time, articles of dress worn to conceal part of his deformity will have less effect here than they will in parts of the city where he is unknown and otherwise treated less well.

Some of the common techniques the individual with a secret defect employs in managing crucial information about himself can now be considered.

Obviously, one strategy is to conceal or obliterate signs that have come to be stigma symbols. Name-changing is a well-known example.⁹² Drug addicts provide another example:

[Re a New Orleans anti-drug drive:] The cops began stopping addicts on the street and examining their arms for needle marks. If they found marks, they pressured the addict to sign a statement admitting his condition so he could be charged under the "drug addicts law." The addicts were promised a suspended sentence if they would plead guilty and get the new law started. Addicts ransacked their persons looking for veins to shoot in outside the arm area. If the law could find no marks on a man they usually let him go. If they found marks they would hold him for seventy-two hours and try to make him sign a statement.⁹³

It should be noted that since the physical equipment employed to mitigate the "primary" impairment of some handicaps understandably becomes a stigma symbol, there will be a desire to reject using it. An example is the individual with declining eye sight who avoids wearing bifocal glasses because these might suggest old age. But of course this strategy can interfere with compensatory measures. Hence the making of this corrective equipment invisible will have a double function. The hard of hearing provide an illustration of the using of these unapparent correctives:

⁹² See L. Broom, H. P. Beem, and V. Harris, "Characteristics of 1,107 Petitioners for Change of Name," *American Sociological Review*, XX (1955), 33-39.

⁹³ W. Lee, *Junkie* (New York: Ace Books, 1953), p. 91.

Aunt Mary [a hard of hearing relative] knew all about early sound receptors, innumerable variations of the ear trumpet. She had pictures showing how such receptors had been built into hats, ornamental combs, canteens, walking sticks; hidden in arm chairs, in flower vases for the dining-room table; even hidden in men's beards.⁹⁴

A more current illustration is "inviso-blended lenses"—bifocals which do not show a "dividing line."

The concealment of stigma symbols sometimes occurs along with a related process, the use of disidentifiers, as can be illustrated from the practices of James Berry, England's first fully professionalized hangman:

It is doubtful whether violence on Berry was ever really planned, but his reception in the streets was such that he took good care whenever possible to avoid being recognized. He told one interviewer that on a number of occasions when travelling to Ireland he concealed his rope and straps about his person so that he was not given away by the Gladstone bag, which was almost as much a mark of his trade as the little black bag was of the Victorian doctor. His sense of isolation and being disliked by everyone he met probably explained the extraordinary episode when his wife and small son accompanied him to Ireland for an execution, although the explanation he offered was that it was to conceal his identity, since—he rightly guessed—no one would suppose that a man walking along holding the hand of a ten-year-old boy would be the executioner on his way to hang a murderer.⁹⁵

One deals here with what espionage literature calls a "cover," and with what another literature describes as a conjugal service possible when a male homosexual and a female homosexual suppress their inclinations and marry one another.

When the individual's stigma is established in him during his stay in an institution, and when the institution retains a dis-

⁹⁴ Warfield, *Keep Listening*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁹⁵ Atholl, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

crediting hold upon him for a period after his release, one may expect a special cycle of passing. For example, in one mental hospital⁹⁶ it was found that patients re-entering the community often planned to pass in some degree. Patients who were forced to rely on the rehabilitation officer, the social service worker, or the employment agencies for a job, often discussed among their fellows the contingencies they faced and the standard strategy for dealing with them. For the first job, official entree would necessitate the employer knowing about their stigma, and perhaps the personnel officer, but always the lower levels of the organization and workmates could be kept in some ignorance. As suggested, it was felt that this could involve a certain amount of insecurity because it would not be known for sure who "knew" and who didn't, and how long-lasting would be the ignorance of those who didn't know. Patients expressed the feeling that after staying in a placement job of this kind for six months, long enough to save some money and get loose from hospital agencies, they would quit work and, on the basis of the six-month work record, get a job someplace else, this time trusting that everyone at work could be kept ignorant of the stay in a mental hospital.⁹⁷

Another strategy of those who pass is to present the signs of their stigmatized failing as signs of another attribute, one that is less significantly a stigma. Mental defectives, for example, apparently sometimes try to pass as mental patients, the latter being the lesser of the two social evils.⁹⁸ Similarly, a hard of hearing person may intentionally style her conduct to give others the impression that she is a daydreamer, an absent-minded person, an indifferent, easily bored person—even someone who is feeling faint, or snores and therefore is unable to answer quiet questions since she is obviously asleep. These character traits

⁹⁶ See the writer's study of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D. C., partly reported in *Asylums* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, 1961).

⁹⁷ For evidence on the frequency of ex-patients employing such a passing cycle, see M. Linder and D. Landy, "Post-Discharge Experience and Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Psychiatric Patients," *Mental Hygiene*, XLII (1958), 39.

⁹⁸ Edgerton and Sabagh, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

account for failure to hear without requiring the imputation of deafness.⁹⁹

A very widely employed strategy of the discreditable person is to handle his risks by dividing the world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies; he co-opts for his masquerade just those individuals who would ordinarily constitute the greatest danger. In the case of close relationships he already has at the time of acquiring the stigma he may immediately "bring the relationship up to date," by means of a quiet confidential talk; thereafter he may be rejected, but he retains his standing as someone who relates honorably. Interestingly, this kind of information management is often recommended by medical practitioners, especially when they have to be the first to inform the individual of his stigma. Thus, medical officials who discover a case of leprosy may suggest that the new secret be kept among the doctors, the patient, and his immediate family,¹⁰⁰ perhaps offering this discretion in order to ensure continued cooperation from the patient. In the case of post-stigma relationships that have gone past the point where the individual should have told, he can stage a confessional scene with as much emotional fuss as the unfairness of his past silence requires, and then throw himself on the other's mercy as someone doubly exposed, exposed first in his differentness and secondly in his dishonesty and untrustworthiness. There are fine records of these touching scenes,¹⁰¹ and a need to understand the huge amount of forget-and-forgiveness they can call forth. No doubt a factor in the rate of success of these confessions is the tendency for the concealer to feel out the concealed-from to make sure before-

⁹⁹ Warfield, *Cotton in My Ears*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 29-30, in Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24. A general statement is provided by Lemert, *Social Pathology*, *op. cit.*, p. 95, under the heading, "counterfeit roles."

¹⁰⁰ B. Roueché, "A Lonely Road," *Eleven Blue Men* (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1953), p. 122.

¹⁰¹ For a scene between a pregnant prostitute and the unknowing man who wants to marry her, see Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 134; for a fictionalized scene between a passing Negro and the white girl he wants to marry, see Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.

hand that the revelation will be received without complete rupture of the relationship. Note that the stigmatized individual is almost foredoomed to these scenes; new relationships are often ones that can easily be discouraged before they take hold, making immediate honesty necessarily costly and hence often avoided.

As already implied, a person who is in a position to blackmail is also often in a position to help the blameworthy individual maintain his secret; moreover he is likely to have many motives for doing so. Thus, managers of resort establishments often enforce a privacy policy that protects the marital truants who sometimes stay or play in these places. Pimps are sometimes similarly solicitous:

The men [pimps] rented rooms in respectable hotels, on the first floor above the lobby, so that their customers could use the stairways without being seen by elevator men or desk clerks.¹⁰²

As are their colleagues:

If their clients are prominent people the girls will not readily identify them or name them in conversation even with each other.¹⁰³

Similarly one reads of the role of a hairdresser employed by girls in a "first-class" house of prostitution:

Indeed, he was more than an artist; he was a sincere friend to every girl in the house, and "Charlie" heard confidences that were seldom given to others, and gave much common-sense advice. Moreover, in his own home on Michigan Avenue he received the mail of girls who were keeping their profession secret from families and friends, and his house served as a place where the girls could meet relatives who came unexpectedly to Chicago.¹⁰⁴

Other illustrations are provided by marital pairs in which one member belongs to a stigmatized category and the other mem-

¹⁰² Stearn, *Sisters of the Night*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ H. Greenwald, *The Call Girl* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958), p. 24.

¹⁰⁴ *Madeleine*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

ber carries a courtesy card. For example, it is suggested that the mate of an alcoholic will help the alcoholic in concealing his failing. The wife of a colostomy case will help him check to make sure that he doesn't smell,¹⁰⁵ and further, may be

. . . stationed in the house to intercept any phone calls or door bells so that irrigation can continue uninterruptedly. . . .¹⁰⁶

The husband of a woman with only the appearance of normal hearing helped in the following manner:

He himself was an awfully nice man, and from the moment we fell in love he knew instinctively how to help me cover my blank spots and redeem my mistakes. He had a clear, resonant voice. He never seemed to raise it, but I always heard what he said; at least, he let me think I did. When we were with other people he watched to see how I was doing and when I floundered he unobtrusively gave me clues to keep me afloat in the conversational stream.¹⁰⁷

It should be added that intimates not only help the discreditable person in his masquerade but can also carry this function past the point of the beneficiary's knowledge; they can in fact serve as a protective circle, allowing him to think he is more fully accepted as a normal person than in fact is the case. They will therefore be more alive to his differentness and its problems than he will himself. Here, certainly, the notion that stigma management only concerns the stigmatized individual and strangers is inadequate.

Interestingly enough, those who share a particular stigma can often rely upon mutual aid in passing, again illustrating that those who can be most threatening are often those who can render most assistance. For example, when one homosexual accosts another, the action may be carried out in such a way that normals are unaware that anything out of the ordinary is occurring:

¹⁰⁵ Orbach *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁷ Warfield, *Keep Listening*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

If we watch very carefully, and know what to watch for in a "gay" bar, we begin to observe that some individuals are apparently communicating with each other without exchanging words, but simply by exchanging glances—but not the kind of quick glance which ordinarily occurs between men.¹⁰⁸

The same kind of cooperativeness is to be found among the circles of stigmatized persons who know one another personally. For example, ex-mental patients who knew each other in the institution may maintain tactful control of this fact on the outside. In some cases, as when one of the individuals is with normals, the individual may give and be given the "go by," the passing by of each other as though they were unacquainted. Where a greeting does occur, it may be handled discreetly; the context of the initial acquaintanceship is not made explicit, and the individual whose situation is the more delicate is accorded the right to pace the acknowledgment and the sociable exchange that follows from it. Ex-mental patients are not alone here of course:

The professional call girl has a code regulating her relations with the client. For example, it is customary for a call girl never to show any signs of recognizing a customer when she meets him in public, unless he greets her first.¹⁰⁹

Where this kind of discretion is not afforded, one can sometimes expect the discredited individual to take active disciplinary action, as Reiss, in his paper on juvenile entrepreneurs, illustrates by quoting an informant.

I was walkin' down the street with my steady girl when this gay drives by that I'd been with once before and he whistles at me and

¹⁰⁸ E. Hooker, "The Homosexual Community," unpublished paper read at the Fourteenth International Congress of Applied Psychology, Copenhagen, August 14, 1961, p. 8. The structure of such a meeting of glances is complex, involving mutual cognitive recognition of social (but not personal) identity; sexual intent is also involved, and sometimes a tacit contract.

¹⁰⁹ Greenwald, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

calls, "Hi, Sweetie." . . . And, was I mad . . . so I went down to where the boys was and we laid for him and beat on him 'til he like to a never come to . . . ain't gonna take nothin' like that off'n a queer.¹¹⁰

It is to be expected that voluntary maintenance of various types of distance will be employed strategically by those who pass, the discreditable here using much the same devices as do the discredited, but for slightly different reasons. By declining or avoiding overtures of intimacy the individual can avoid the consequent obligation to divulge information. By keeping relationships distant he ensures that time will not have to be spent with the other, for, as already stated, the more time that is spent with another the more chance of unanticipated events that disclose secrets. Examples may be cited from the stigma management work done by wives of mental patients:

But I've cut off all our other friends [after citing five who "knew"]. I didn't tell them that I was giving up the apartment and I had the phone disconnected without telling anyone so they don't know how to get in touch with me.¹¹¹

I haven't gotten too friendly with anyone at the office because I don't want people to know where my husband is. I figure that if I got too friendly with them, then they would start asking questions, and I might start talking, and I just think it's better if as few people as possible know about Joe.¹¹²

By maintaining physical distance, the individual can also restrict the tendency of others to build up a personal identification of him. By residing in a region with a mobile population, he can limit the amount of continuous experience others have of him. By residing in a region cut off from one he ordinarily frequents he can introduce a disconnectedness in his biography: whether

¹¹⁰ A. J. Reiss, Jr., "The Social Integration of Queers and Peers," *Social Problems*, IX (1961), 118.

¹¹¹ Yarrow, Clausen, and Robbins, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

intentionally, as in the case of an unmarried pregnant girl going out of state to have her child, or of small-town homosexuals going to New York, Los Angeles, or Paris for relatively anonymous activity; or unintentionally, as in the case of the mental patient who gratefully finds that his place of commitment is far out of town and hence somewhat cut off from his ordinary contacts. By staying indoors and not answering the phone or door, the discreditable individual can remove himself from most of those contacts in which his disgrace might be established as part of the biography others have of him.¹¹³

A final possibility must now be considered, one that allows the individual to forego all the others. He can voluntarily disclose himself, thereby radically transforming his situation from that of an individual with information to manage to that of an individual with uneasy social situations to manage, from that of a discreditable person to that of a discredited one. Once a secretly stigmatized person has given information about himself it becomes possible, of course, for him to engage in any of the adaptive actions previously cited as being available to the known-to-be stigmatized, this accounting in part for his policy of self-disclosure.

One method of disclosure is for the individual voluntarily to wear a stigma symbol, a highly visible sign that advertises his failing wherever he goes. There are, for example, hard of hearing persons who wear a batteryless hearing aid;¹¹⁴ the partly blind who affect a collapsible white cane; Jewesses who wear a Star of David as a necklace. It should be noted that some of these stigma symbols, such as a Knights of Columbus lapel button indicating that the wearer is Catholic, are not frankly presented as disclosures of stigma, but purportedly attest rather to membership in organizations claimed to have no such significance in themselves. It should be noted also that militant programs of all kinds can be served by this device, for the self-symbolizing indi-

¹¹³ An example regarding concealment of illegitimate pregnancy is given in H. M. Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 53 ff.

¹¹⁴ Barker *et al.*, *Adjustment to Physical Handicap and Illness*, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

vidual ensures his being cut off from the society of normals. The manner in which a sect of New York Jews present themselves provides an example:

Obgehitene Yiden, "*Guardian Jews*," include those so-called ultra-Orthodox Jews who not only observe the *Shulhan Aruch* in the most minute detail but are most meticulous and zealous in their observance. They perform all the prescribed commandments and precepts with the greatest care. These people are overtly identifiable as Jews. They wear beards and/or special traditional clothing for the exclusive purpose of being externally identified as Jewish: beards so that the "image of God should be upon their faces," traditional garments so that they "may refrain from any possible sin."¹¹⁵

Stigma symbols have the character of being continuously available for perception. Some less rigid means of disclosure are also used. Fleeting offerings of evidence may be made—purposeful slips, as it were—as when a blind person voluntarily commits a clumsy act in the presence of newcomers as a way of informing them about his stigma.¹¹⁶ There is also "disclosure etiquette," a formula whereby the individual admits his own failing in a matter of fact way, supporting the assumption that those present are above such concerns while preventing them from trapping themselves into showing that they are not. Thus, the "good" Jew or mental patient waits for "an appropriate time" in a conversation with strangers and calmly says: "Well, being Jewish has made me feel that . . ." or "Having had firsthand experience as a mental patient, I can . . ."

Earlier it was suggested that learning to pass constitutes one phase in the socialization of the stigmatized person and a turning point in his moral career. I want to suggest now that the stigmatized individual can come to feel that he should be above passing, that if he accepts himself and respects himself he will feel no need to conceal his failing. After laboriously learning to conceal, then,

¹¹⁵ S. Poll, *The Hasidic Community of Williamsburg* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1962), pp. 25-26.

¹¹⁶ Bigman, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

the individual may go on to unlearn this concealment. It is here that voluntary disclosure fits into the moral career, a sign of one of its phases. It should be added that in the published autobiographies of stigmatized individuals, this phase in the moral career is typically described as the final, mature, well-adjusted one—a state of grace I will attempt to consider later.

Covering

A sharp distinction has been drawn between the situation of the discredited with tension to manage and the situation of the discreditable with information to manage. The stigmatized employ an adaptive technique, however, which requires the student to bring together these two possibilities. The difference between visibility and obtrusiveness is involved.

It is a fact that persons who are ready to admit possession of a stigma (in many cases because it is known about or immediately apparent) may nonetheless make a great effort to keep the stigma from looming large. The individual's object is to reduce tension, that is, to make it easier for himself and the others to withdraw covert attention from the stigma, and to sustain spontaneous involvement in the official content of the interaction. However, the means employed for this task are quite similar to those employed in passing—and in some cases identical, since what will conceal a stigma from unknowing persons may also ease matters for those in the know. It is thus that a girl who gets around best on her wooden peg employs crutches or an artful but patently artificial limb when in company.¹¹⁷ This process will be referred to as *covering*. Many of those who rarely try to pass, routinely try to cover.

One type of covering involves the individual in a concern over the standards incidentally associated with his stigma. Thus the blind, who sometimes have a facial disfigurement in the region of the eyes, distinguish among themselves according to whether this is the case or not. Dark glasses sometimes worn to give volun-

¹¹⁷ Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

tary evidence of blindness may at the same time be worn to cover evidence of defacement—a case of revealing unsightedness while concealing unsightliness:

The blind, in all conscience, have enough advertisement of their condition without adding a cosmetic factor to it. I can think of nothing that would add so much to the tragedy of a blind man's position as the feeling that, in the fight to regain his vision, he had lost not only the fight but the wholesomeness of his appearance as well.¹¹⁸

Similarly, since blindness can lead to the appearance of clumsiness, there may occur a special effort to re-learn motor propriety, an "ease and grace and adeptness at all those motions which the sighted world looks upon as 'normal.'" ¹¹⁹

A related type of covering involves an effort to restrict the display of those failings most centrally identified with the stigma. For example, a near-blind person who knows that the persons present know about his differentness may yet hesitate to read, because to do this he would have to bring the book up to a few inches of his eyes, and this he may feel expresses too glaringly the qualities of blindness.¹²⁰ This type of covering, it should be noted, is an important aspect of the "assimilative" techniques employed by members of minority ethnic groups; the intent behind devices such as change in name and change in nose shape is not solely to pass, but also to restrict the way in which a known-about attribute obtrudes itself into the center of attention, for obtrusiveness increases the difficulty of maintaining easeful inattention regarding the stigma.

The most interesting expression of covering, perhaps, is that associated with the organization of social situations. As already suggested, anything which interferes directly with the etiquette and mechanics of communication obtrudes itself constantly into the interaction and is difficult to disattend genuinely. Hence individuals with a stigma, especially those with a physical handi-

¹¹⁸ Chevigny, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²⁰ Criddle, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

cap, may have to learn about the structure of interaction in order to learn about the lines along which they must reconstitute their conduct if they are to minimize the obtrusiveness of their stigma. From their efforts, then, one can learn about features of interaction that might otherwise be too much taken for granted to be noted.

For example, the hard of hearing learn to talk with the degree of loudness that listeners feel is appropriate for the situation, and also to be ready to deal with those junctures during interaction that specifically require good hearing if the proprieties are to be maintained:

Frances figured out elaborate techniques to cope with "dinner lulls," intermissions at concerts, football games, dances, and so on, in order to protect her secret. But they served only to make her more uncertain, and in turn more cautious, and in turn more uncertain. Thus, Frances had it down pat that at a dinner party she should (1) sit next to someone with a strong voice; (2) choke, cough, or get hiccups, if someone asked her a direct question; (3) take hold of the conversation herself, ask someone to tell a story she had already heard, ask questions the answers to which she already knew.¹²¹

Similarly, the blind sometimes learn to look directly at the speaker even though this looking accomplishes no seeing, for it prevents the blind from staring off into space or hanging the head or otherwise unknowingly violating the code regarding attention cues through which spoken interaction is organized.¹²²

¹²¹ Condensed from Warfield, *Cotton in My Ears*, *op. cit.*, p. 36, in Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹²² Chevigny, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

3.

GROUP ALIGNMENT and EGO IDENTITY

In this essay an attempt has been made to distinguish between social and personal identity. Both types of identity can be better understood by bracketing them together and contrasting them to what Erikson and others have called "ego" or "felt" identity, namely, the subjective sense of his own situation and his own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences.¹

Social and personal identity are part, first of all, of other persons' concerns and definitions regarding the individual whose

¹ The term "self identity" would be apt here but its extension, the term "self identification," is commonly used to refer to something else, namely the individual himself establishing his personal identity through documentation or testament.