ACCOMPLISHING THE SIGHTED WORLD

by

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ABSTRACT

Blindness is commonly and ordinarily understood to be an exclusively physiological phenomenon. That is, the genesis of blindness is typically framed within a physiological paradigm. Thus, blindness is commonly understood to be caused by a malfunction of the physiological processes of seeing. It is precisely within this physiological paradigm that research on blindness, for the most part, is framed.

Further it is commonly and ordinarily understood that blind persons perceive the world inaccurately. Within this perspective, it is held that blind persons must be "taught" various aspects of the "sighted world" in order that they may live as "normally" as possible within this world. Thus, research in the area of blindness typically aims at the formulation of rehabilitative methods and procedures whereby blind persons are "taught" what it is they have to know in order to coexist with sighted others in a "sighted world". In short, then, investigators of blindness are typically involved in speculating about how it is that blind persons should live.

This sort of speculation, however, precludes any understanding of how it is that blind persons do live and, thus, avoids any understanding of how blind persons interact with sighted others in a "sighted world". This study represents an investigation of at least some of the ways in which blind persons understand the "sighted world" and some of the ways in which blind persons socially interact within this "sighted world".

Thus, blindness is treated here not merely as a physiological phenomenon, but rather as a social phenomenon. The method of participant observation is utilized to develop an ethnography of blindness in order to demonstrate some of the ways that blind persons interact with sighted others within a "sighted world". Further, ethnographic data is presented and analyzed in an attempt to show how blind persons accomplish the "sighted world".

Blind persons are involved in an activity which, within sociological terms, can be called "passing". Conventionally, "passing" is understood as an activity engaged in by socially stigmatized persons in an attempt to conceal their social stigma. Blind persons, however, are not involved in "passing" only in an attempt to conceal their blindness from others, instead, blind persons are involved in "passing" in order to display their knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to the paramount reality, namely, the "sighted world".

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I intend to present an analysis of the phenomenon of blindness which treats blindness not merely as a physiological phenomenon, but rather, as a social phenomenon. Chapter I is devoted to a formulation of the problem that is to be addressed in this analysis as well as to a description of the source and type of data that is to be presented. In Chapter II I introduce into this analysis the concept of "passing". This chapter includes a brief explication of both Goffman's characterization of "passing" and Garfinkel's characterization of "passing". By presenting ethnographic data, I intend, in Chapters III and IV, to further analyze the concept of "passing" with specific reference to blind persons living in a "sighted world".

1. The Problem

Much of the research in the area of blindness has been and is concerned with what it is that blind persons should know in order to function as normally as possible in our society. Not only has this research been concerned with establishing the kinds of things that blind persons should know, but also, it has been concerned with the formation of methods whereby blind persons can obtain this knowledge. Thus, this research has, in part, resulted in the development of massive rehabilitative programs for blind persons.

This research,[1] which is carried on by both lay and professionals, has as its basis, the understanding that;

(1) Blindness is an exclusively physiological phenomenon, the generation of which is not to be located within the socially organized practices and activities of certain professions such as the ophthalmological profession and the rehabilitation services to blind persons profession.[2]

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[1] See, for example, Carroll (1961), Chevigny and Braverman (1950), Cholden (1958), Finestone (1960), and Lowenfeld (1971). A further warrant for the following characterization is my experience as a blind person and my experiences with other blind persons. See part 2 of this chapter.

[2] A possible exception to this is the work of Robert A. Scott (1969). Scott suggests that "Blind men are not born, they are made". (Scott, 1969:121) In his analysis of American agencies "for the blind", Scott utilizes a socialization model to propose that these agencies act to socialize blind persons and hence, to a large degree, are responsible for the various

(2) Blindness is an unfortunate and terrible occurrence.

(3) The onset of blindness causes certain social psychological difficulties and, in certain instances, certain psychiatric difficulties. Further, these difficulties are more recognizable and better understood by professionals than by blind persons themselves and these professionals are more capable of dealing with these difficulties than are blind persons themselves.

(4) Blind persons must recognize and accept their blindness as a physical handicap and make the best of it.

(5) Blind persons must "adjust" to the wider sighted society and, for most blind persons, this requires professional "help".

(6) The wider sighted society should be educated and made aware of the features of blindness, blind persons, their limitations and capabilities.

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social and psychological characteristics of blind persons. A socialization model, however, precludes any understanding of "how" blind persons live and interact in a "sighted world".

(7) Blind persons, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on whether their blindness is total, partial, congenital, or adventitious, do not share perceptions and understandings of the world in common with sighted persons.

(8) The visual experiences that blind persons have are invalid and essentially incorrect. It is typically understood that an "objective world" exists and that to perceive and understand this world accurately, "normal sight" is required.

Given these understandings, the task of these researches then becomes to decide what it is that blind persons should know and how it is they are to obtain this knowledge in order to coexist with sighted others within a "sighted world".

This sort of policy leads investigators to speculate about what it is that is best for blind persons, what they should know, how they can come to know what they should know, how they should live, in other words, how they should conduct themselves in order to give the appearance of a "normally-well-adjusted-blind-person". This overriding concern with establishing how blind persons "should live" has ignored, almost totally, any concern for discovering how blind persons "do live", i.e., how blind persons socially interact within a "sighted world".

In order to determine how blind persons should live, investigators, be they lay or professional, typically invoke theories of socialization and resocialization. Within the normative[3] sociological paradigm the bona fide member of society is viewed as one who has been adequately socialized and thus conducts his or her everyday affairs in a culturally appropriate and acceptable manner. A fundamental orientation of the normative paradigm, as Wilson suggests (Wilson, 1970: 59), is that social interaction is "rule governed". Thus, in order for a social order to exist, members of society must come to know, understand and abide by the social rules of everyday life. Members acquire and internalize this knowledge and understanding via the socialization process. That is, it is through this process of conscious and unconscious learning that members acquire and internalize the knowledge of, understanding of, and adherence to the rules, norms, values, mores, and the rest of the normative furniture of everyday life.

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[3] I take the concept "normative" from my reading and understanding of Wilson (1970:59-66) and Cicourel (1970:4-45).

The socialization model presupposes that there exists in society certain persons who can be characterized as "entitled members" of society or "entitled members" of a specific group within society. It is from these "entitled members" that newcomers into a society such as immigrants and children and newcomers into specific groups within society such as new members of an occupation or new members of any other collectivity, learn the rules which govern everyday affairs.

Hence, investigators of blindness have been concerned with the discovery and formulation of procedures whereby congenitally blind persons may be appropriately socialized so that they can assume the role of "well-adjusted-blind-person", or at least, assume the role of "blind person". In the case of adventitiously blind persons, these investigations seek to discover and formulate procedures whereby a person can move from one status to another, namely, from "sightedness" to "blindness", in a word, from being a sighted person to being a blind person. Following Goffman (1952:462-463) these investigations view those persons who lose their sight as, in a sense, dying as a sighted person and being reborn necessarily and only as a blind person.

There are, however, certain difficulties that emerge when blindness is viewed from the socialization model. More fundamentally, there are certain difficulties that emerge within the model of socialization, per se.

For instance, within normative sociology, the key to "humanness" is to be found in the socialization model. Thus, as MacKay points out, "For the sociologist, to be human is to be socialized.", and, "To be socialized is to acquire roles." (MacKay, 1974:181) This view, however, suggests that if social interaction is possible at all it is somehow or other inappropriate or inadequate until persons come to share norms, roles, values, etc., in common with one another.

In the case of blindness, the socialization model is incongruous with the actual activities of blind persons in everyday life. There are many instances of blind children being born in our society as well as many instances of persons experiencing sight loss. Blind children are typically born into already existing families and persons lose their sight within an already existing social circle of family, friends, acquaintances and so on. Furthermore, blind children are continually interacting within the world into which they are born. Similarly, the person who experiences sight loss at some point during his or her life does not simultaneously experience an immediate halt to his or her interaction with others. In other words, social interaction does not have to wait for the newly blinded person to be resocialized.

There is no doubt that children who are born blind learn about themselves, about others, and about their society from sighted others and there is no doubt that when persons lose their sight at some point during their life they undergo certain transitions and changes from their previously sighted existence. But to couch these differences and changes within socialization terminology is to "gloss"[4] the phenomenon of transition from sightedness to blindness and the phenomenon of difference between blind persons and sighted persons. In short, I am following MacKay's formulation that "socialization is a gloss . . . which precludes the explication of the phenomenon it glosses" (MacKay, 1974:181), that is, the interaction between blind persons and sighted persons and the interaction between blind persons and the sighted world.

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[4] I follow Garfinkel's usage of the concept "gloss" as he uses it in opposition to the concept "explicate". (Garfinkel, 1967:33)

In the investigation of blindness that is presented here, I will follow a somewhat different set of assumptions from those followed by more conventional investigators of blindness. In the first place, I understand blindness to be a social phenomenon. This is not to imply that blindness is not a physiological phenomenon because, of course, a malfunction in the physiological processes of seeing is obviously a crucial factor in the origin of blindness. I am suggesting, however, that in order for physiologically locatable events to be discovered, recognized, named, treated, and otherwise made sense of, presupposes a socially organized world in which this discovering, recognizing, naming, treating, etc., are products of and accomplishments of socially organized practices and activities.[5]

Secondly, I take it that blind persons do interact in a sighted world and do interact with sighted persons. The topic of this investigation, thus, becomes the interaction between blind persons and the sighted world and how this interaction is accomplished.

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[5] For an excellent discussion on the socially organized practices that accomplish the biologically locatable phenomenon of "death" and "dying" see Sudnow (1967). In terms of death by suicide being treated as a social accomplishment see Garfinkel (1967:11-18). For a similar treatment of the same subject see Atkinson (1971:165-190). Garfinkel also treats sexedness, normally a biological phenomenon, as a "cultural event". (Garfinkel, 1967:116-185)

It would be an impossible task to examine all aspects of social interaction between blind persons and the sighted world since I do not understand nor am I aware of all of the ways in which blind persons do interact with the sighted world. Hence, I will restrict my investigation to an examination and explication of the phenomenon of "passing" as it applies to blind persons.

With respect to the phenomenon of "passing" I will make extensive use of Goffman's notion of passing (Goffman, 1963:73-91) as well as Garfinkel's notion of passing (Garfinkel, 1967:116-185). It is necessary, therefore, to present a review of passing as it is formulated by Goffman and Garfinkel respectively. Before doing so, however, it will be instructive to present a brief characterization of the type and sort of data to be utilized in this study.

2. The Data

In this study I consider my own experiences as a blind person and my experiences with other blind persons as data and will present this data ethnographically. In this section I intend to briefly explicate the sources of my data and, in so doing, to characterize why it is that I consider my own experiences as constituting data.

In an analytical sense, and only in an analytical sense, the sources of the ethnographic data to be presented here can be specified by arranging them into four distinct categories.

First, I was employed as a case worker at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (C.N.I.B.) from the fall of 1971 to the late summer of 1976. From 1971 to 1974 I was employed as a full-time caseworker and from 1975 to 1976 as a part-time caseworker, i.e., only during the summers of those two years.

Retrospectively, I characterize the first two years of my activities at the C.N.I.B. as typical "casework activities". In other words, my concerns centered around gaining competence as a C.N.I.B. caseworker within the taken-for-granted paradigm of casework "for-the-blind". I operated under the unexplicated assumptions (specified in Chapter I, Part 1) that rehabilitation staff personnel at the C.N.I.B. typically took for granted. Discovering and formulating effective ways of "helping" blind persons to adjust to their plight was not only a central concern of mine but a central concern of all other rehabilitation personnel. These discoveries and formulations were, of course, embedded in an unexamined, taken-for-granted, and thus unexplicated schema of common-sense interpretations about blindness, blind persons, and the way they "ought to live".

Of course, my interest in studying the phenomenon of blindness springs from and is informed by my own experiences as a blind person, but also, springs from and is informed by my increasing awareness that blindness is a social phenomenon, generated and produced by the socially organized activities and practices of individuals within a socially organized world. Further, I came to understand blind persons as engaged in managing and accounting for their everyday activities within an everyday reality as it is constituted and presented to them by sighted others. This understanding led me not only to consider my "role" as a caseworker at the C.N.I.B. differently, but also to consider my own blindness differently.

Therefore, the perspective from which I viewed my activities as a caseworker at the C.N.I.B. altered radically during the summers of 1975 and 1976. I carried out my activities as a caseworker "as usual" but, at the same time, I began making detailed notes about my own activities as well as making notes about the activities of others. Sociologically speaking then, I was involved in gathering data via the participant observation method.

A second source for the ethnographic data to be presented here comes from what may be called my "research contact" with the C.N.I.B. Prior to the last 8 months, with very minor exceptions, my contact with the C.N.I.B. has been restricted to my employment experience with the Manitoba Division of the C.N.I.B. in Winnipeg. However, during the last 8 months I have spent several days gathering data at the Vancouver office of the C.N.I.B. My contact with the C.N.I.B. in Vancouver was not in an employment capacity.

Because of my past employment history at the C.N.I.B. I found it relatively easy to secure the permission of the Director of the Vancouver office to conduct research in that institution. I was given permission by the Director to go anywhere I wished within the C.N.I.B. and to speak to whomever I pleased. The Director also instructed his staff that I would be "coming around" and that they were to make work spaces available to me as well as their time.

I received this situation as troublesome in two ways: (1) some of the staff felt compelled to make their time and work spaces available to me and received my presence as troublesome and interfering, and (2) in the course of interacting with some of the staff members, I found it extremely difficult to restrict my participation and not express my own thoughts and opinions about whatever was being talked about or about whatever was being done. Whether or not I overcame these difficulties is a question to which I feel a categorical answer is impossible. I relied upon my own methods and procedures for interacting with staff members and treated these methods and procedures as problematic. .

My interaction with blind persons on a personal basis provides a source for my ethnographic data. Many of my personal friends are blind. From these friendships and, from doing what friends typically do together, I have learned a great deal.

The University of British Columbia, where I am presently a graduate student, has a resource whereby printed materials are made available to blind persons via tape recordings, large print, and braille. Because I utilize this service I have become acquainted with several blind students and have participated in various activities with them such as "hanging around the library" and attending parties.

Finally, and most importantly, another source of the ethnographic data that is presented in this study is my own "lived experience" as a blind person. I began experiencing sight loss at approximately 9 years of age. By the time I was 12 years old I had lost most of my vision. At present, ophthalmologically speaking, I have approximately 5% of normal vision. This visual acuity constitutes me, in a sociolegal sense, as a blind person.[6]

I consider my own life experiences as my primary source of data while my experiences with other blind persons I consider as a secondary source of data. In short, in the study of the phenomenon of blindness I utilize myself as my own "best informant". In a sense, using myself as my own best informant does not represent a radical departure from conventional sociological method. In all of sociological method, be it participant observation, experimental small groups, or, survey research, the investigator must constitute something as data, must constitute something as findings, and does so by invoking his or her common-sense knowledge and understanding of the social world. Typically, however, these investigators do not specify and explicate their common-sense knowledge and understandings of the social world which they invoke to constitute their investigations as "social science". (Cicourel, 1964) Considering myself as my own best informant, therefore, acts to explicate my common-sense knowledge and understanding of the world and makes explicit their influence on my investigation. Further, since my own biographical situation acts to, in part, constitute the phenomenon which I seek to study, then, using myself as my own best informant, makes explicit how I constitute the phenomenon under investigation.

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[6] In Canada a person is considered blind if he or she has a visual acuity of less than 20/200 (approximately 10% of normal vision) in the better eye after correction or if his or her visual field does not exceed a diameter of 20° in the better eye after correction. To quote, in part, The Blind Persons Act of Canada:

> A person is considered "blind" if the visual acuity in both eyes with proper refractive lenses is 20/200 (6/60) or less with Snellen Chart or equivalent, or if the greatest diameter of the field of vision in both eyes is less than 20 degrees.

> "The sociological observer, therefore," writes Cicourel, "who fails to conceptualize the elements of common-sense acts in everyday life, is using an implicit model of the actor which is confounded by the fact that his observations and inferences interact, in unknown ways, with his own biographical situation within the social world. The very conditions of obtaining data require that he make use of typical motives, cues, roles, etc., and the typical meanings he imputes to them, yet the structures of these common-sense courses of action are notions which the sociological observer takes for granted, treats as self-evident. But they are just the notions which the sociologist must analyze and study emperically if he desires rigorous measurement." (Cicourel, 1964:223)

Since the subject matter I am investigating in this study is blindness and since I am blind, I am not only a scientific observer of the phenomenon but also a participant in the phenomenon. This investigative situation goes beyond the assumption of the participant observer role in participant observation, that is, I am not somehow or other an artificially constituted participant (an artificial blind person) as well as, unknown to the subjects of my investigation, a scientific observer. I am a "real", "actual" blind person with some subjective sense of what it is to be a blind person as well as, at the same time, an observer of my own experiences and the experiences of other blind persons. To come to an understanding of how blind persons receive themselves and receive the social environment in which they live and act, it becomes crucial that I examine how I receive myself and how I receive the social environment in which I live and act. Thus, because of the way I participate in and observe the phenomenon I seek to study the subjective interpretations used by blind persons to manage their everyday affairs in a sighted world are more available to me. For, as Schutz writes,

> Correctly understood, the postulate of subjective interpretation as applied to economics as well as to all the other social sciences means merely that we always can - and for certain purposes must - refer to the activities of the

> subjects within the social world and their interpretation by the actors in terms of systems of projects, available means, motives, relevances, and so on. (Schutz, 1973:35)

At this point, it will be instructive to show how Schutz characterizes the "disinterested observer".

> His motives are not interlocked with those of the observed person or persons; he is "tuned in" upon them but not they upon him. . . . Precisely this fact constitutes the so-called "disinterestedness" or detachment of the observer. He is not involved in the actor's hopes and fears whether or not they will understand one another and achieve their end by the interlocking of motives. Thus his system of relevances differs from that of the interested parties and permits him to see at the same time more and less than what is seen by them. . . . In order to understand them the observer has to avail himself of his knowledge of typically similar patterns of interaction in typically similar situational settings and has to construct the motives of the actors from that sector of the course of action which is patent to his observation. The constructs of the observer are, therefore, different ones than those used by the participants in the interaction, if for no other reason than the fact that the purpose of the observer is different from that of the interactors and therewith the systems of relevances attached to such purposes are also different. . . . The scientific observer of human interrelation patterns, the social scientist, has to develop specific methods for the building of his constructs in order to assure their applicability for the interpretation of the subjective meaning the observed acts have for the actors. (Schutz, 1973:26-27)

Utilizing myself as my own best informant means that I am totally involved in living the life of a blind person. My blindness is not an objective category "out there", rather, it is a "lived experience", lived within the real, concrete, actual material conditions of my own life. How I receive myself and my social environment, how I manage and account for my everyday activities, and how other blind persons do so, is routinely and topically available.

As I mentioned earlier, this study will investigate the phenomenon of "passing" in terms of its applicability to blind persons. One of the ways in which I, and other blind persons, manage our affairs of everyday life is to "pass". As we shall see in more detail later, blind persons' passing is an activity whereby their acceptance of and deference to the "sighted world" as the "real-sensible-rational-objective-world" is displayed. Put differently, blind persons accept and treat the "sighted world" with deference as it is constituted and presented to them by sighted others. Before detailing blind persons' passing by presenting and analyzing ethnographic data, it is necessary to present a characterization of the concept of "passing" as it is constituted by Goffman and Garfinkel respectively. Thus, the following chapter will briefly characterize what Goffman and Garfinkel intend by the concept "passing".

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF PASSING

1. Goffman's Perspective

To begin with, Goffman dichotomously characterizes those persons who possess a social stigma, whatever it might be, as being either "discredited" or "discreditable" persons. (Goffman, 1963:41-42) According to Goffman, those persons whose social stigma is immediately perceivable by others, or is otherwise known to others, are discredited persons. On the other hand, those persons whose social stigma is not immediately perceivable by others, or otherwise known to others, are discreditable persons. It is this latter type of socially stigmatized persons that may be involved in passing. These persons may be involved in "the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self". (Goffman, 1963:42)

Goffman recognizes situations in which discredited persons pass, albeit an involuntary and possibly unattended activity. The initiation of the passing activity (initiated by the occasion) provides an opportunity for the discredited person to conceal his or her social stigma. Thus:

> 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. . . . 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, or a blind man wearing dark glasses sitting in a dark bar may be taken as a seeing person by a newcomer. (Goffman, 1963:74)

Thus, for Goffman, most socially stigmatized persons do, at one time or another, pass. Of course, passing occurs only on those occasions and in those situations where the person's social stigma is not immediately perceivable, or otherwise known, to others.

A further characterization of Goffman's concept of passing is that some socially stigmatized persons live a "double life". (Goffman, 1963:76-78) This occurs when a person with a social stigma such as, for example, drug use, attempts to conceal the stigma from one collectivity of persons, e.g., the police, while at the same time, not concealing his stigma from another collectivity of persons, e.g., fellow drug users. Thus, Goffman characterizes this situation in terms of the stigmatized person leading a "double life".

A key feature of Goffman's characterization of passing is that it is cyclical. That is, a person's passing moves in a cyclical manner from "unwitting passing" to "complete passing". Thus, for Goffman, this 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. (Goffman, 1963:79)

When passing is received by a socially stigmatized person as being a necessary activity that person must learn to pass. (Goffman, 1963:80) Goffman, however, does not explicate this important issue.

According to Goffman, persons who are attempting to keep secret or to conceal a social stigma will find themselves, during the course of everyday life, in three possible places. (Goffman, 1963:81) First, there are "forbidden or out-of-bounds" places where the socially stigmatized person, given the exposure of their stigma, are forbidden to be and where such exposure simultaneously means expulsion. Secondly, there are "civil places". Goffman characterizes "civil places" as those places where, if the socially stigmatized person's stigma is known, he will be treated, albeit carefully and painfully, as a person whose presence in that place is acceptable. This occurs even though the entitled members of a "civil place" are reluctant to accept the socially stigmatized person. Finally, there are "back places" where the socially stigmatized person can freely interact with other persons possessing the same social stigma without attempting to conceal the stigma or without intentionally disattending it.

Goffman goes on to suggest some of the problems experienced by persons who pass. For example, in an attempt to conceal a physical impairment by displaying other attributes-attributes which can be attributed to him or her by others in lieu of the physical impairment. Thus, "slovenliness, as when a near-blind person, affecting to see, trips over a stool, or spills drink down his shirt". (Goffman, 1963:84) It is this phenomenon which I consider to be one of the "keys" to passing. It is crucial that, while passing, a person be able to turn his or her passing activity into "normal" activity. Thus, if I trip on a stair, while engaged in passing, it is crucial that those who are in a position to observe take my passing activity as "sloppiness" and not, to use Goffman's term, "near-blindedness". Two further problems that passers may be confronted with, according to Goffman, are having their social stigma revealed by the nature[7] of the stigma itself and being confronted by others when their passing, is "found out". (Goffman, 1963:84-85) Furthermore, Goffman points out, (Goffman, 1963:88) socially stigmatized persons must be alive to and sensitive to certain features of settings which, for "normals", are taken for granted and to which they apparently do not attend. Since settings and occasions of everyday life are not stable features, the discreditable person must constantly and continuously scan settings in order to effect undetected passing. "The person with a secret failing, then," writes Goffman, "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." (Goffman, 1963:88)

With reference to blind persons, Goffman cites the following example:

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[7] Here, Goffman is referring to a recognition of the social stigma by others with respect to the recognition of certain features inherent in the social stigma. For example, when a blind person (especially one who has partial sight) is attempting to conceal his or her blindness by passing as a sighted person, it may be necessary for him or her to unobtrusively "feel" the surface of a table for an object such as an ashtray. To some, this "feeling" may go unnoticed or may not be taken to be "looking for an ashtray". But, to others who may know other blind persons who are involved in passing, or, to others who are themselves blind persons involved in passing, this "feeling" may be recognizable and taken as evidence of blindness.

> 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 colour 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. (Goffman, 1963:88)

Summarily, then, Goffman's concept of passing can be characterized in the following way.

(1) Only discreditable persons are involved in passing. That is, if the social stigma of a socially stigmatized person is known to the other, passing is not an issue, simply it does not occur.[8]

(2) Inherent in passing is a danger with respect to social interaction. When a person who

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[8] Since Goffman suggests that all stigmatized persons, whether they are "discreditable" or "discredited", are involved, at one time or another, in passing, this point may appear somewhat contradictory. It should be noted, however, that Goffman characterizes "discredited" persons as passing only in "private places". For example, a black person who is obviously black and who, for whatever reason, wants to pass as a white person, will not do so in "public places". He or she may, however, pass as a white person during such occasions as letter writing, telephone calls, and the like, provided these activities are done in the "privacy" of their own home.

is passing is "found out" the result is social ruin, i.e., a collapse in the existing social interaction. Although Goffman does not make this explicit, presumably, the "found out" person will have to provide a reason for concealing his social stigma from the other. Further, this reason must be appropriate and acceptable in the sense that the other will view the reason as a valid and viable one hence making the passing activity understandable and sensible to the other.

(3) The activity of passing is episodic. That is, among other things, passing is bounded by clock time. Socially stigmatized persons can be seen to have "passed" in various situations and occasions.

(4) Passing is a problematic activity for those who pass. It involves development and implementation of various strategies for concealing a social stigma.

(5) The success or failure of passing depends upon and is determined by consequences. Failure at passing will be negatively consequential, while, success at passing will be

non-consequential or uneventful.

2. Garfinkel's Perspective

In his work on passing (Garfinkel, 1967:116-185), Garfinkel extends and elaborates the concept of passing as it is characterized by Goffman. Garfinkel's work on passing involves the study of an intersexed person (Agnes), who while possessing male genitalia, possessed the thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of a female.

Most persons in our society take their sex status, and the sex status of others, as being an "obvious" and "plainful" fact. Moreover, a person's sex is "obvious" to the extent that there is no choice in the matter, i.e., you are what you are, it is none of your doing, you are, because of "chance of birth", either a male or a female.

For Agnes, however, this taken-for-grantedness, "obviousness", "factualness", about one's sex status did not apply. Agnes neither took her sex status for granted nor was it none of her doing. Despite her biological incongruity (incongrous with her thoughts, feelings, and behaviour) Agnes chose and decided to be a female. Agnes was, therefore, constantly, continuously, and consistently involved in recognizing and producing femaleness, whereas, most other persons in society see this recognition and production of the appropriate sex status as having nothing to do with them and, moreover, as being a "normal", "natural", event which does not require their attention or calculated achievement. Agnes, on the other hand, saw her sex status as having everything to do with her. She did not take her sexedness for granted. Unlike most other persons in society, Agnes both saw and noticed that she was recognizing and producing femaleness, and saw and noticed that others were recognizing and producing femaleness.

Agnes did not reject society's claims about person's sexedness. For instance, she did not see her own particular situation as an instance of a "third sex", but rather, accepted the common-sense view that there were only two sexes - male and female. She saw herself as a female, but through some accident of birth, she was cursed with male genitalia. Thus, "Agnes vehemently insisted that she was, and was to be treated as, a natural, normal female". (Garfinkel, 1967:122) Moreover, "one could never consider Agnes a revolutionary or a utopian. . . . Challenges to the system were for Agnes not even so much as hopeless risks. She wanted 'in'. The 'credentials committee' was at fault." (Garfinkel, 1967:177-178) Her task, then, was to be the natural normal female that she knew herself to be. Thus, "doing femaleness" for Agnes involved passing.

In light of Agnes' situation, Garfinkel characterizes passing as, "the work of achieving and making secure their rights to live in the elected sex status while providing for the possibility of detection and ruin carried out within the socially structured conditions in which this work occurred I shall call ' passing'." (Garfinkel, 1967:118) The terms "detection" and "ruin" are crucial terms in Garfinkel's characterization. That is, if the fact that Agnes possessed male genitalia was at any time detected by others her claim to natural, normal femaleness would undoubtedly be discredited and her claim would be considered illegitimate.

Agnes could not operate under the taken-for-granted assumption that others would take the same position that she did were they to exchange positions.[9] More correctly, it is not the case that others would view Agnes' position differently were they to exchange positions, but rather, it is the case that others would not see changing positions with Agnes as a possibility. That is, from a member's point of view, Agnes was a male who "elected" to become a female. In other words, femaleness did not just "happen" to Agnes but was a sex status which was chosen and elected by Agnes. Given the taken-for-granted assumptions about sexedness, members would typically view Agnes' election of a female sex status as "perverse" and not as something that may "happen" to them. Thus, passing was a crucial and necessary activity in Agnes' daily affairs. It was crucial and necessary because if her secret was found out, "the disclosure . . . she was convinced and feared, would ruin her." (Garfinkel, 1967:136)

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[9] Schutz calls this common-sense-taken-for-granted phenomenon the "reciprocity of perspectives". (Schutz, 1973:11-13) Garfinkel characterizes this as "the existance of a problematic 'community of understandings' by and about sexed persons treating each other's sex as known in common and taken for granted by them." (Garfinkel, 1967:126)

Thus, Garfinkel restates, what for Agnes, constituted passing.

> The work of achieving and making secure her rights to live as a normal, natural female while having continually to provide for the possibility of detection and ruin carried on within socially structured conditions I call Agnes' "passing". (Garfinkel, 1967:137)

Garfinkel characterizes some of Agnes' passing within a "game model". (Garfinkel, 1967:140-145) He suggests that some of her passing activity can be bounded by the occasion, i.e., can be described as episodic. For example, the management devices that Agnes employed for managing changing or not changing into a bathing suit when she accompanied her friends to the beach. Or, the devices she employed to avert her room mate's (a female) potential suspicions when she detected a scar on Agnes' abdomen caused by an exploratory laparotomy.

For the most part, however, Agnes' passing could not be adequately described and analyzed within a game model, i.e., her passing was, for the most part, not episodic. Most of Agnes' passing involved learning what to do while she was doing it.

> Agnes and her interaction partners would be directed to a valuable mutually understood goal while at the same time another goal of equivalent value, to which the other person contributed, remained known to Agnes alone and was carefully concealed. In contrast to the episodic character of the occasions that were described previously, such an occasion was characterized by its continuing and developmental character. Further, its "rules" are learned only over the course of the actual interaction, as a function of actual participation, and by accepting the risks involved. Several persons were prominent in her accounts with whom she not only acted like a lady but learned, from them, how to act like a lady. (Garfinkel, 1967:146)

Thus, Garfinkel characterizes Agnes' passing not merely and only as a strategy for producing "correct" female behaviour, that is, it wasn't merely the case that Agnes somehow or other knew what sorts of appearances would be recognized by others as female and, thus, proceeded to produce these female appearances. Female appearances and standards were produced by Agnes while, at the same time, she was learning what constituted these appearances and standards. "They had to be learned," writes Garfinkel, "by participating in situations where she was expected to know the very things that she was simultaneously being taught." (Garfinkel, 1967:147)

Garfinkel points out (Garfinkel, 1967:166) that although Goffman's strategic analysis paradigm is temporarily helpful in that it is useful for the enumeration of Agnes' management devices, strategic analysis clouds the very phenomenon with which it is necessary to deal. According to Garfinkel, "these phenomena consist of Agnes in on-going courses of action directed to the mastery of her practical circumstances by the manipulation of these circumstances as a texture of relevances." (Garfinkel, 1967:166)

Garfinkel suggests (Garfinkel, 1967:166-167) that in order for Goffman's strategic analysis paradigm to adequately describe and analyze the phenomenon of passing "inner time" must not be considered. In other words, Goffman's analysis only treats those occasions which are episodic, "or turn the situations that his scheme analyzes into episodic ones." (Garfinkel, 1967:167) In short, then, Garfinkel's characterization of passing suggests that socially stigmatized persons cannot be said to have "passed" in certain bounded occasions, but rather, that socially stigmatized persons are involved, in a more continuous fashion, in passing, i.e., they can be said to be "passing".

Thus, Garfinkel's concept of passing may be characterized in the following way.

(1) Passing is an activity engaged in only by persons who are attempting to conceal certain information. That is, some persons, such as Agnes, possess information about themselves which they receive as discrediting if that information becomes known to others. Therefore, if a person possesses some discrediting feature, for example a social stigma, whatever it might be, and, if that social stigma is immediately perceivable, or otherwise known to others, then that person is not engaged in passing.

(2) Detection of a person's passing, and hence, of a person's discrediting feature or information, causes, at least for the passer, social ruin. If a person's passing is detected it will be difficult, if not impossible, for that person to provide "good reasons" for doing so. That is, the taken-for-granted assumption that the other will view one's situation in an identical way, if they were to exchange positions, is not operative

for a person who finds it necessary to pass.

(3) Whether a person discovers his or her passing to be successful or not, depends upon and is determined by consequences as displayed by others. Thus, if an occasion is uneventful, i.e., if others receive the passer to be what he or she claims to be, then, the passing is viewed by the passer as successful.

(4) Passing consists of courses of action which are directed to the mastery of practical circumstances by the manipulation of these circumstances as a texture of relevances. Passing, then, is not a "once-in-a-clock-time" phenomenon, instead, it is an on-going course of action which is not bounded by "clock-time." Further, within this perspective, "stigma" is an "occasioned" phenomenon. That is, a particular phenomenon is not considered to be a stigma in and of itself, but rather, is a stigma only within the practical circumstances of its "occasioned" occurence.

An examination of the above characterization will show, with the exception of item 4, that Garfinkel's concept of passing is identical with that of Goffman. That is, for both Garfinkel and Goffman, passing is an activity

(1) which is only engaged in by discreditable persons which, (2) if detected results in social ruin at least for the passer, and (3) the success or failure of which is determined consequentially. The most saleint difference between Goffman and Garfinkel's characterizations is that, for Goffman, passing is an episodic phenomenon, whereas, for Garfinkel, passing is an on-going continuous phenomenon. Thus, Garfinkel's characterization of passing may be understood as an extension and elaboration of Goffman's characterization.

Having briefly explicated the concept of passing from the perspective of Goffman and Garfinkel, I would now like to re-examine this concept in the light of some ethnographic data. Thus, keeping in mind Goffman's and Garfinkel's notions of passing, I turn now to a presentation and analysis of the ethnographic data.

CHAPTER III

THE GENESIS OF MANAGEMENT DEVICES

Before discussing some of my passing occasions and management devices, it will be instructive to present a brief characterization of my visual impairment. Even though I began experiencing sight loss at approximately 9 years of age, my eye condition was not opthalmologically diagnosed until I was 16 years old. At that point, my eye condition was diagnosed as "macular degeneration". Very simply, the part of the eye (macular or fovea centralis) which functions to clarify images, so to speak, had, in my case, degenerated.

This degeneration not only prevents me from seeing clearly, but also, minimizes my distance vision. Opthalmologically speaking, my visual acuity, at this point, is approximately 5% of normal. Since approximately 12 years old, my visual acuity has not exceeded 10% of normal. Because my visual acuity is opthalmologically established as being less than 10% of normal, I am, in a socio-legal sense, a "blind person".[10]

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[10] See footnote 5.

What and how much I can see becomes a relatively simple matter to describe if viewed opthalmologically. That is, I can see approximately 5% of what the "normally seeing" person can see. Experientially, however, what and how much I can see, is a matter which is not so simply described. It is tremendously difficult, if not impossible, for me to describe what I can see and how much I can see. What follows, therefore, (the ethnographic data) is perhaps the only way for me to describe what it is I can see and how much I can see.

As both Goffman and Garfinkel so lucidly point out, social phenomena, including blindness, are contexted phenomena. That is, their meaning, their sense, their intelligibility, can be discovered only within the context of everyday life. Thus, how I receive my blindness turns on my understanding of (1) my practical circumstances, and my understanding of, (2) how others receive my blindness, given that they know I am blind, or, how others will potentially receive my blindness if they were to "find out" that I am blind. It is upon these understandings, therefore, that the character of my passing is determined. For example, at one point during my life (my teens), it seemed to me very important to conceal or keep secret my blindness from others. It was my understanding that if others, especially my sighted peers, were to discover my blindness, I would no longer be accepted as one of the group and would be forced out of my then current circle of friends. It was my understanding, then, that if my blindness was detected my claim to being "one of the gang", now redefined as being "one of the gang who was normally sighted" would be seen as false and illegitimate, and furthermore, would result in extreme embarrassment and social psychological ruin.

Thus, since my "prevailing system of interests" (Schutz, 1973:76) was to make secure my claims to being a "normally sighted person" and since this claim depended upon my portraying myself as a "normally sighted person", I understood that it was necessary for me to pass as a "normally sighted person". I understood myself to be, to use Gôffman's terminology, a "discreditable" person and, to use Garfinkel's terminology, employed passing as a course of action in order to prevent my blindness from being detected.

My claim to normal sightedness required constant and consistent vigilance. It was necessary for me to recognize sightedness, to produce sightedness, and moreover, to recognize, and to ensure, that others recognized my productions for what they were, namely, sightedness. Furthermore, it was essential that my productions of sightedness be recognized as such "at a glance".[11] That is, I had to ensure that, at a glance, my behaviour could and would be recognized as normal and natural, i.e., that I would be recognized and taken for a normal, natural, sighted person. In short, I had to make it clear and plainful that, at a glance, it could be "seen", and taken for granted, that I was obviously and in fact a "normally sighted person".

How I passed and the kinds of management devices I employed to make my appearances intelligible as sightedness, can be exemplified considering my high school classroom behaviour. Frequently, during English class, our teacher would read aloud the various novels, plays and poems we were studying. She required students not only to listen to what she was reading, but also, to follow along, visually, the material that she was reading. Thus, students would sit at their desks and read silently the materials that the teacher was reading aloud.

My task, then, became to discover how this was done. Some unobtrusive observations soon made the "how" of this task available to me. My observations revealed to me that there was more than one way to accomplish this task. For instance, I could claim that I had forgotten, lost, or otherwise did not have, the relevant materials with me. In such cases the teacher would merely suggest that I move my desk next to another student's and follow along in his or her book. This was a very compatible solution since the other student did most of the "work". It was not necessary for me to find the starting page or to turn pages. In other words, it minimized my activity, and hence, minimized the chance of someone detecting my blindness. That is, there was no chance of me starting on the wrong page, or, "reading" the wrong page, or, turning the page at the wrong time.

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[11] Sudnow discusses "glances" and other types of "looking" as they relate, in a temporal sense, to social interaction. (Sudnow, 1972:259-279)

This sort of "getting-the-other-person-to-do-the-work" is a device I use frequently and in many situations. For example, a handshake ia a very "smooth" well coordinated social activity. Persons seem to be able to carry off a handshake with very little difficulty and, if difficulty does occur, it is immediately and effectively remedied. Presumably, the handshake is a social event which is effected by a very well hand-eye coordinated activity which enables both persons to effect a "smooth" handshake. In order to carry off this kind of social activity, I, once again, get the other person to "do the work". I understand that there are situations where a handshake is, typically, acceptable and expectable. For example, handshakes occur when persons are introduced to one another, greet one another, etc. When I discover myself to be in such situations I understand that a handshake is not only acceptable but expectable. In order to accomplish this social activity "smoothly" I typically put out my hand before the other puts out his or hers. Doing so, "gets" the other to accomplish the hand-eye co-ordination necessary to accomplish a "smooth" handshake. Of course, this turns on my being able to recognize the appropriate moment to put out my hand.

To return to the classroom. This "getting-the-other-person-to-do-the-work" was a solution that was, however, not "foolproof". It lacked consistency over time. The claim "not having my book with me" was not a claim that could be used consistently and continuously, since, it was expected that students would either have their books with them, or, if this was not the case, would get a book for next time. Therefore, this tactic could be used only sporadically. I then had to make use of an alternative method for doing "reading-along-in-your-book". This method required that I sit at my desk in a "slouching" position that I came to recognize as "normally sighted male class member's reading position".

Through inconspicuous looking and hearing I could then tell when pages were being turned and could react accordingly. This method, however, required some prior preparation.

Since I could not "see" the page numbers in the book, it was necessary for me to find a way to begin reading on the same page everyone else did. The method I devised to deal with this problem was to use some different type of pagination. I made markings large enough for me to recognize, and for me to recognize as page numbers, at every tenth page. So, for example, if we were to begin reading on page 52, I would merely find the marking which indicated page 50, count two pages, and arrive at the proper place. It is important to mention that this "special pagination" was recognizable as pagination only to me. It was, in a sense, a "code" which I could recognize as page numbers, but which was recognizable to others, who chanced to see it, as merely "doodling".

Another example of my passing in the classroom had to do with my activities in geometry class and my activities relevant to geometry class. Our geometry teacher would administer weekly home quizzes. These quizzes consisted of a number of geometry problems which were to be done at home that evening and brought back to class the next day. During geometry class, the teacher typically asked two or three students to stand, read out aloud a specific geometry theorem, put down the book from which the theorem was read, and proceed to the chalkboard where the student was to explain the theorem by use of his or her own examples.

This "teaching technique" posed, for me, two immediate and overriding problems: (1) being chosen to stand and read the theorem aloud, and (2) since, if this happened, it would pose a serious threat to my passing, how to discover the "type" of student the teacher chose for this exercise.

After speaking casually to students who had been chosen, I discovered that they typically did poorly in their quizzes. This information provided me with a resource for a solution to my problem. I began spending a great deal of time and energy studying geometry. This study was, of course, done at home where various study aids were available to me in the form of "visual aids". And, as I mentioned, the quizzes were done at home, since the geometry problems were constructed in order to test our understanding of geometric principles rather than memory, so that using the geometry text was not necessarily beneficial. I scored extremely well in all of the geometry quizzes and, therefore, reduced the chances of being asked to read geometry theorems aloud.

In this instance, I used another technique to ensure that I would not be asked to read aloud. That is, I produced "good student behaviour". I sat erect in my seat in class, "looked" toward the teacher at all times, smiled, nodded my head in an attentive manner, and asked plenty of questions. Obtaining excellent grades in the geometry quizzes and doing "good student behaviour" minimized my chances of being asked to read aloud. After all, it is not necessary to ask an excellent and interested student to substantiate his excellence and interest.

My passing, then, was an attempt to keep secret some information (my blindness) the disclosure of which I was convinced would result in social ruin. Further, it should already be evident that the perceived tragic result of detection made my passing, in a sense, analogous to the sort of passing which might be done in "espionage" work. It is precisely this "espionage" character of passing that appears in Goffman's analysis. Further, Garfinkel finds Agnes' passing, "entirely comparable to passing found in political undergrounds, secret societies, refugees from political persecution, or Negroes who become whites." (Garfinkel, 1967:136)

Even though, within my high school setting, I had developed some effective management devices and, thus, was able to effectively pass as a "normally sighted person", I found the high school setting a very difficult setting in which to pass. For example, keeping my blindness "secret" required having to inform certain types of persons about it. An illustration of this apparently paradoxical circumstance will serve as a clarification. Further, some data will illustrate the complex character of my passing.

One such circumstance was the writing of examinations, particularly final examinations. The final examination policy, in the high school I attended, was to arrange hundreds of desks in the gymnasium where all of the students in the high school would write their examinations. In my case, the gymnasium was a far from perfect environment in which to write examinations, i.e., there were no windows, the lighting was poor, etc.

Christmas examinations were also managed in the same manner. Thus, if I had decided to write the examinations in the usual way, my blindness would have undoubtly been detected, since, the teachers who graded the examinations would have certainly noticed a number of incongruities in my examination answers with respect to the examination questions. Therefore, it became necessary for me to tell my teachers about my blindness.

I typically did this "telling" shortly before examination time. Thus, I would inform my teachers about my blindness approximately three months into the school year. Special arrangements were then made for me so that I could write these examinations.

When I was asked by teachers (an inevitable question) why I had not told them about my blindness earlier, I replied that I was "self-conscious" about the fact that I was "different". I also told the teachers that I would be extremely embarrassed if my fellow students were to "find out" about my blindness and asked my teachers if they would keep this fact secret. In every instance, the teachers said that they "understood" my dilemma and would protect my secret.

In this sense, it becomes clear how another feature of my passing was to reveal my blindness to those persons who I "knew" would ultimately and eventually detect it. Further, my strategy in informing these persons about my blindness was not primarily employed so that I could more effectively perform a task, for example, writing examinations (although this certainly was a consideration), but rather, it was employed to minimize the risk of a large number of persons detecting my blindness. For example, if a teacher detected my blindness without me having informed him or her, the fact that it was detected may have been brought up by the teacher in a situation where several of my fellow students were present, namely, in the classroom.

Moreover, the terms within which I accomplished my "telling" turned on my understanding of a teacher's schema of interpretation. For example, the understanding of teacher's schema of interpretations which was operative for me was that teachers are concerned about not only the academic development of students, but are also concerned with students' social psychological development as well as their social psychological problems. Thus, I accomplished my "telling" within a paradigm of "adolescent self-consciousness" and "adolescent embarrassment" and not, for example, within a paradigm of "it's none of anyone else's business".

Even though, for the most part, the teachers responded to my "telling" in an "understanding" and "sympathetic" way, there was one other typical and consistent response. I was typically and consistently told that I would eventually have to "accept" and "face the fact" of my handicap. Presumably, from the point of view of the teachers, my passing was a sort of "non-acceptance", or more correctly, a "lack of adjustment" to my handicap.

I found this sort of "reasoning" to be prevalent during my experiences as a caseworker at the C.N.I.B. As a caseworker a large part of my responsibility was as a counsellor to blind students in the school system. Consequently, I spent a great deal of time in conversation with teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, and Department of Education officials. I often found, in greater or lesser degree, that all of the students I "worked with" were involved in passing. Further, I found that those students who were most effective in passing were also those students who school officials considered "most adjusted". Again, this "adjustment" was a matter of degree. That is, the students who were most effective at passing were never "seen" by school officials as "totally adjusted", but rather as the "most well adjusted" blind students. The school official's position seemed to amount to the following: "This student is pretty well adjusted, and now, if we can only get him or her to 'accept' his or her handicap!"

For example, one of the students I "worked with" was a 12 year old boy who was considered by his teachers as "well adjusted". According to my observations, he was also one of the best passers on my case load. The only complaint that the teachers had about him was that he was, in some situations, unwilling to ask for "help". His teacher exemplified this "unwillingness to ask for "help", and thus this "lack of acceptance" of his handicap, by relating an incidence of his behaviour.

This instance had to do with this 12 year old's (Billy's) attempt to find the bathroom in the school. The teacher observed him standing outside both the boy's and girl's bathroom doors (which were in very close proximity). After Billy stood there for about 5 or 10 minutes, explained the teacher, he finally entered the proper, i.e., the boy's bathroom. Since I am involved in a similar type of behaviour, I was fairly certain of Billy's intention. After speaking with him about the situation, my assumption was substantiated.

Billy was able to "see" and thus to identify the two doors as being bathroom doors. He also "knew" that one of the doors was the door to the girl's bathroom while the other door was the door to the boy's bathroom. However, he was not able (at the beginning of the school year) to distinguish between the two doors and, therefore, did not "know" which door was the appropriate one for him to enter. Billy also "knew" what "boys" and "girls" "looked" like, i.e., he knew what boys did in order to portray "boyness" and he knew what girls did in order to portray "girlness". Standing outside the bathroom doors for a few minutes enabled Billy to determine who was going in and who was coming out of which doors. In other words, after a few minutes of observation, Billy was able to tell that boys were entering and exiting from one of the doors, while girls were entering and exiting from the other door. Billy then "knew" which of the doors was the appropriate door for him to enter.

Billy's teacher, in a sense, knew what Billy was doing, but formulated, understood, and otherwise made sense of Billy's behaviour, by "seeing it" as an unwillingness, on Billy's part, to ask for help, and consequently, a lack of total acceptance of his handicap. However, the crucial point is not that Billy was unwilling to ask for help or that Billy was not accepting his handicap, but rather, that Billy was "finding" the bathroom. Billy's teacher, on the other hand, thought that if Billy would ask for someone "in the know" to point out the right door to him, this "asking" would be an indication, a sign, a document of, Billy's acceptance of his handicap. Billy's behaviour, however, was not an instance of acceptance or lack of acceptance, but, was an instance of Billy, using certain resources, finding the appropriate bathroom. Billy was passing. Billy was accomplishing "finding the correct bathroom door".

The data I have presented so far suggests that

(1) blind persons (particularly those with some sight) pass in order to conceal a social stigma which they receive as discrediting, and (2) this passing, as Garfinkel suggests (1967:166), involves courses of action directed toward the mastery of practical circumstances by the manipulation of these circumstances as textures of relevances. Moreover, this passing is not an isolated, "once-in-a-clock-time" activity, but, is an activity relevant to, and motivated by, a "prevailing system of interests".

Further, by example, I pointed out how one of my prevailing systems of interests was to legitimize my claim as a "normally sighted member of society", particularly within my teenage peer group. The sort of complex planning and behaviour that is involved in such passing can be further understood in the light of the following data.

In the particular neighbourhood in which I grew up, (Winnipeg's north end), it was customary, and almost compulsory, that when a male turned 16 years old, he would obtain a driver's licence. One of the ways in which an individual could formulate himself or herself as being "sixteen years old" was to make a legitimate claim to being able to drive a car. This claim was legitimized, of course, by obtaining a driver's licence.

(Obtaining a driver's licence was not nearly as crucial for females as it was for males.)

A sixteen year old did not only see himself as old enough to drive, but, he was seen by others as old enough to drive. Every sixteen year old boy expected that other sixteen year old boys would possess a driver's licence and expected that they expected it of him. This expectation did not only exist among sixteen year olds, but, many adults in the community expected this and "saw" sixteen year old boys as possessing driver's licences.

Because of my blindness, however, this expectation was impossible for me to fulfill. On the other hand, to explain why it was that I did not have a driver's licence, by informing my peer group that I was blind, would have revealed this hitherto unknown fact and thus presented me with a whole host of new difficulties with which I did not want to deal. It was, thus, necessary for me to bring other resources and contexts to bear in order to remedy this difficulty.

I utilized the context of the community, in which I lived, in order to remedy the indexical properties of "my not having a driver's licence". The community in which I lived, as I have already mentioned, was Winnipeg's north end. Sociolgically speaking, the north end was, and still is, a lower class community comprised of, for the most part, a population characterized by multi-ethnic group membership and affiliation. Many of the teenaged males of the community were involved in quasi-delinquent activities and, to a lesser degree, so were the teenaged females. I characterize quasi-delinquent activities as including consumption of alcohol, fighting, driving cars in excess of the speed limits, and the like.

I received the north end as a community where the "guys were tough" and where involvement in such quasi-delinquent activities was not only appropriate, but acceptable, and, to some degree, expectable. I also assumed and expected that my circle of friends and acquaintances received the north end in a similar, if not identical, way. It was this context, then, which I brought to bear in order to remedy the perceived difficulty of not having a driver's licence.

It was necessary for me to develop a "reason", within this context, for not having a driver's licence. The "reason" which I felt it necessary for me to have, was not a "reason" in the "that-it-makes-sense" orientation, because, after all, the fact that I didn't have a driver's licence because the amount of vision that I had did not permit me to drive was, itself, a sensible reason. The "reason" had to be received by others sensibly, reasonable, and rationally, in as much as I was presenting myself in daily life as a "normally seeing person". Therefore, my "reason" had to orient to the "fact" that a "normally seeing person" did not have a driver's licence and not to the "fact" that a blind person did not have a driver's licence.

Given that I had imposed this context on my situation, how I accounted for this fact, that I did not have a driver's licence, was to bring to bear one of the quasi-delinquent activities, namely, "drunk driving". Thus, my "reason" for not having a driver's licence was that while driving under age I was apprehended by the police, discovered to have been drinking, and, therefore, my right to take a driver's test was officially and legally postponed until my seventeenth birthday. This "reason" was not only sensible and reasonable to my peers, but also, provided me with one year's "grace", i.e., I did not have to create another "reason" for not having a driver's licence for at least one more year.

Although, for at least one year, I did not have to establish or formulate other "reasons" for not having a driver's licence, the establishment and formulation of my "reason" was not a "once-for-all" activity. My friends and acquaintances had to "see" me in a consistent and continual manner as not having a driver's licence "because" I was apprehended by the police for "drunk driving". Not only did they have to "see" me in this manner, but also, they had to "report" me in this manner. In other words, "talk" was a crucial activity and was oriented to by me in order to substantiate and legitimate the fact that I was a "normally sighted person" who, because of being apprehended by the police for drunk driving, was not "legally" capable or able to obtain a driver's licence. Therefore, it was necessary for me to provide documents and evidences of this fact to others, so that, during conversations at parties and other informal gatherings, any "talk" about me and my driving would orient to my "reason" for not having a driver's licence. Talk, then, became as much a constituent feature of my "not having a driver's licence" as was my conduct and activities. Moreover, it was necessary for me to initiate talk about driver's licences in order to constitute my "reason" for not having one as legitimate and sensible.

The following example of such talk will serve to illustrate and explicate this point. Within my particular circle of friends and acquaintances, parties were a frequent event. These parties generally required several days of preparation. Parties were usually held to celebrate a "special" event such as Christmas, New

Year's and events such as birthdays. The planning consisted of establishing the place for the party, i.e., the issue was that the party would be held at the residence of the person whose parents would be out of town or otherwise not available for the weekend. Several days of preparation were also necessary in order to obtain alcohol. Because most of the participants were not old enough to obtain alcohol, the illegal purchase of alcohol took some preparation.

People usually arrived at the parties in cars. This presented no difficulty for me since everyone knew I could not drive because I did not have a driver's licence. Thus, it was relatively easy for me to arrange for one of my friends to pick both me and my date up in his car. Frequently, however, my date was not aware of my driving status. An explanation, however, was not necessary in that double-dating was a frequent and common practice and thus required no explanation in terms of why I was not driving.

If, however, I was to continue to date this girl, she would have to be informed about my driving situation. Moreover, in order to keep my claim to being a "normally sighted person" legitimate, she would have to be informed within the proper context, i.e., she would have to be informed about my drunk driving.

It would have been easy for me to tell her. This "telling", however, would have had to have been done in a very deliberate manner so as not to raise suspicion. In other words, I would have had to have constructed the occasion of "telling" where the "telling" was appropriate and connected to the occasion. That is, in order to minimize suspicion the "telling" would have to be done during a conversation where driving, or more specifically drunk driving, was being discussed.

A technique I often utilized was to "get" someone else to tell my date. Thus, at a party, and in the presence of my date, I would ask someone for the loan of his car. I would give a perfectly valid reason for wanting to use the car, such as, to pick up more alcohol, or, to pick up a friend who should be at the party, etc. I would always be sure to ask this favour of one of the "in guys", i.e., a popular person who was admired and respected by others. Further, I would always make sure that this "in-guy" was the type of person who would want to minimize his possible confrontation with the police and, thereby, ensure that he would object, because of my alleged driving record, to me using his car. In this way, I would initiate a dialogue between the person with the car and myself.

The person with the car would object and refuse me the loan of his car. In turn, I would persist with my request, keeping the dialogue in a joking manner, until he would give me the "reason" for not loaning me his car. The "reason", of course, as I would "get" him to say, was that he did not want to risk suspension of his own driver's licence because of my confrontation with the police. In this way, he would, in a sense, "tell" my date about why it was that I did not have a driver's licence. I had to manipulate and monitor the whole conversation. I would have to be persistent only up to a point. If I persisted too far in my request, there was a chance that he would have given in to my request and submitted to letting me use his car. Therefore, it was necessary for me to be in total control not only of my own talk but of his talk as well.

Again, this could only have been carried off if my passing was constant, consistent, and continuous. Another and very important constituent feature of my passing was my biography.

It was necessary for me to develop a biography whereby such claims to not driving would be sensible and reasonable. Thus, I took deliberate care and caution to be "noticed" as one of the "tough guys". I participated in all the sports that were considered as "tough" and which I could handle given my blindness. Furthermore, I participated in the consumption of alcohol and in all the alcohol consumption related activities. This participation, to some degree, required intensive and extensive observation. During our "drinking episodes" I deliberately observed various drinking patterns and behaviour. The intention of my observation was to be able to recognize and to produce legitimate drinking behaviour. I learned to recognize and produce such drinking activity as the appropriate way to sit or stand, the appropriate way to hold the drink, the appropriate way to drink, the appropriate way to "talk drinking", and so on.[12] Thus, in these ways, and in many other ways, I was able to develop and sustain a biography which would be conducive to my "reason" for not driving.

My passing, then, involved the manipulation of my practical circumstances as textures of relevances by employing courses of action directed toward the control and mastery of these practical circumstances.

Furthermore, I was engaged in passing in order to conceal my blindness. This concealment, I was convinced, was undoubltely necessary for me to sustain and maintain social relations with my peer group. And, I was equally convinced, that detection would result in the ruin and collapse of these same social relations.

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[12] This sort of observing and learning how to "do drinking" while "doing drinking" was not an activity which only I participated in. Everyone else involved in these "drinking episodes" would have to be able to produce appropriate drinking activity. Thus, all of us learned from each other "how" to drink.

This sort of reasoning seems amenable given the common-sense understandings of "the adolescent years". That is, one of the common-sense notions in our society is that perceived differences, be they social, physical, or psychological represent, for adolescents, a source of anxiety. Framed within this common-sense understanding, then, my passing can be viewed as a reasonable and sensible activity.

Even though, at the present time, I am not involved in such complicated and covert practices, I still pass. I take it that if I am oriented to by others as a blind person, this orientation will structurally eliminate me from many, what may be called, "sighted activities".[13] Thus, if my conduct and activities are oriented to by others as the conduct and activities of a "blind person", this orientation would limit my possibilities for social interaction with others. For example, orienting to me as a blind person may, for others, result in a reluctance to orient to me as a co-participant. Given these orientations, the following kinds of questions may occur to others: Should I ask him to come jogging with me? Can he see well enough to do this? If he really doesn't see well enough to do it, will asking him to come jogging with me only embarrass him further?

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[13] In his discussion of the "visibly handicapped" Davis (1964:120-137) addresses the issue of interaction between the "visibly handicapped" and "normals". Although he does not specify it within these terms, Davis nonetheless points out that perceivable physical handicaps structurally limit persons from participating in various "non-handicapped" activities. (Davis, 1964:125)

Another consideration which is operative for me is the sense others will make of my conduct given that they orient to me as a blind person. For example, after telling one of my university professors about my blindness and while leaving his office, I "stumbled" on a chair. He immediately got up from his chair, moved the chair I had stumbled on, while, at the same time, apologizing to me for having left the chair there. I take it that this university professor remedied the indexical properties of my "stumbling incident" not as a "stumbling incident, but rather, as a document of and as evience of the fact that I was blind.[14]

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[14] A similar kind of analysis can be found in Weider's discussion of how staff personnel, in a half-way house for drug users, remedied the indexical properties of certain conduct and objects as providing documents and evidences of drug use among the half-way house residents. (Weider, 1974:101-111)

This prevention of others orienting[15] to me as a blind person is, at least, one of the motivations for my present passing. Much of my passing is concerned with establishing my appearances as appearances of a "normally sighted person". Thus, it is my concern to recognize and to produce sightedness and to have my productions recognized by others as sightedness.

For instance, much of my passing is done in such public settings as large public buildings, public transportation facilities, walking down the street, and the like. What is crucial within these settings is that I make my activities available to others as sensible and reasonable. That is, like everyone else, I do a sort of "work" to make my activities, at a glance, available to others as sensible and reasonable. Unlike everyone else, however, I am, for the most part, conscious of my "work" and conscious of the "methods" and "procedures" that I utilize to display sensibility and reasonableness. One such general method is to portray myself to others as a "competent-normally-sighted-person", or, at least, to display the fact that I am a bona fide member of society.

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[15] I am not suggesting that there are not occassions in which others do orient to me as a blind person. Certainly, this is so. I use the term only to suggest that in much of my interaction I do not receive others as orienting to me as a blind person.

Sightedness can be achieved and produced in various ways in public settings. This can be exemplified in the way I manage the crossing of traffic light controlled intersections.

In most instances, I am not able to "see" the traffic light, and hence, determine whether or not it is in my favour, and therefore, whether or not it is appropriate and safe to cross the street. Thus, I use a combination of various other procedures in order to "see" whether or not it is appropriate and safe for me to cross the street.

For instance, I listen to and watch traffic flows. After several minutes or several occasions of observations I am able to "see" the order in which the traffic lights operate. That is, this observation enables me to determine the order in which the direction of traffic is allowed to flow, whether or not left hand lanes are allowed to turn, whether or not right hand lanes are allowed to turn, and so on.

Further, I observe the pedestrian traffic. This observation tells me when the pedestrians "see" that it is appropriate and safe to cross the street. In most instances, I take it that whether the light is in the pedestrian's favour or not, the pedestrian will not cross unless it is safe. At any rate, my simultaneous observation of traffic and pedestrian flows enables me to determine when it is appropriate and safe for me to cross the street.

There are, however, instances where there is very little traffic at a traffic light controlled intersection and where pedestrians are not crossing at the place that I wish to cross. In these instances another kind of "work" is necessary.

For example, I may find it necessary to stand on the corner for a longer period of time in order to determine whether or not I should cross the street. It is conceivable and entirely possible that I will be standing on the corner while the traffic light is indeed in my favour. Therefore, I do "work" which I take it will ensure that others will remedy the indexicality of my standing on the corner, eventhough the light is in my favour, in an appropriate way.

One method is to do "daydreaming". That is, even though I am intensely observing the situation, I do "work" which I recognize and assume that others recognize as "daydreaming". Then, when I am sure that it is safe and appropriate to cross the street, I do what I take to be "snapping out of daydreaming" and assume that others recognize my behaviour as "snapping out of daydreaming". In other words, I was standing there daydreaming, and finally realized that the light was in my favour.

Another method which I employ, and incidentally prefer, is to do "waiting" - I lean against the traffic light pole, which is typically situated on the corner, and do "waiting" while at the same time intensely observing the situation. As soon as I determine that it is safe and appropriate to cross the street, I can glance at my wristwatch and cross, i.e., I can do "well-I've-waited-long-enough-its-time-to-go".

I do a similar kind of "work" when I walk down stairs in public places. I am always able to tell if there are stairs, i.e., that stairs are approaching. What I am often unable to determine, however, is where, precisely, the stairs begin. I do not have this difficulty with stairs that go up, but, I am often presented with this difficulty in the case of stairs going down. I also do not have this difficulty if the down stairs have a colour contrast or if artificial or natural lighting (in the case of outside down stairs) creates a shadow on each of the stairs which allows me to determine where, precisely, the stairs begin. "Going down stairs" is an activity which is similar to crossing streets at traffic light controlled intersections or going through doors. That is, it is an activity, which while being done, is "supposed" to be unproblematic.

People do not typically have problems accomplishing such activities. Moreover, these activities are not what Turner calls "core activities". (Turner, 1972:370&453) That is, persons do not enter public buildings in order to walk up and down stairs.[16] Instead, persons walk up and down stairs in order to "get somewhere". Thus, "doing stairs" is typically an unproblematic and taken-for-granted activity. What then becomes problematic for me, is to give my "doing stairs" an unproblematic and taken-for-granted appearance. In other words, in some instances, going down stairs is for me a problematic activity which is not taken for granted. Therefore, I utilize various methods whereby my going down the stairs can be received by others as an unproblematic taken-for-granted activity.

What I typically do is something that I can call "reminding work". I approach the down staircase to a point that I can recognize as being a few inches from where the downward direction of the stairs actually begins. I then stop and then by, for example, "snapping my fingers", "looking at my wristwatch", and so on, I can give the appearance of having forgotten something or of just having reminded myself of something. While I am stopped and am doing my "reminding work" I then unobtrusively slide my foot along the floor until it reaches the first down stair. At that point, I do another kind of "work". I do "Oh well that's all right" work. That is, I do a sort of work that I assume others recognize as "even though I have reminded myself of something, it doesn't matter and therefore I will proceed down the stairs".

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[16] In this case, I have imputed what Schutz (1973: 69-72) calls "in-order to motives" to members as a way to receive members' activities as sensible and reasonable.

Another method that I use to "do stairs", and incidentally prefer, is to do another kind of "work" which I recognize and assume others recognize as "I better check it out". For example, while walking on the university campus, I typically carry books or a briefcase or some other appropriate university materials. When I arrive at some down stairs, I stop and "check out my materials". In other words, I stop and examine my books in order to make sure (to give the appearance of) that I have the correct materials before proceeding. From this point the method is identical with the "reminding work" method.

All of the work that I do in managing public settings would, of course, be unnecessary if I would simply carry a white cane. A white cane would immediately make my blindness known to others. I could then overtly observe traffic lights and overtly find the beginning of a down staircase and these activities would be rendered sensible and reasonable by others because of the presence of the white cane.

Carrying a white cane, however, would require me to pass and to do just as much "work" as I do by not carrying a white cane. That is, I would then have to pass as a "blind person".

For example, I have no difficulty walking down the street safely and appropriately. If, however, I carried a white cane, "normal walking down the street" would appear incongruous. I would then have to do "work" in order to pass as a "blind person", whatever that might "look like".

In sum, the data I have presented in this chapter can be effectively framed within the model of passing specified by Goffman and further extended and elaborated by Garfinkel. Thus, my daily activities, as presented in this chapter, can, within Goffman's and Garfinkel's model, be characterized as passing. My passing can, therefore, be summarily characterized in the following way.

(1) Because I receive my blindness as a social stigma and because I receive it as potentially discrediting, I engage in passing in

order to conceal it from others. Further, because I receive my blindness as not being immediately perceivable by others, I consider myself to be, in Goffman's terms, a "discreditable" person.

(2) The detection of my blindness by others, I am convinced, will result in certain kinds of social interactional ruin. This "ruin", as I understood it in my teen years, meant that I would be eliminated from most, if not all, peer group activity. Presently, I understand "ruin" to mean that my interaction with others will be structurally limiting.

(3) Whether or not I take my passing to be successful, in any occasion of its production, depends upon the perceived consequences of my passing. That is, if I understand that others do not attribute the motive of blindness to my activities or to the construction of an occasion where I am present, then I receive my passing to be successful.

(4) My passing consists of courses of action which are directed to the mastery of practical circumstances by the manipulation of

> these circumstances as a texture of relevances. I cannot pass if I only receive my daily life as being a series of "clock-time" bounded occasions which I must "get through" and manage. I structure my biography, my prospects, and my motives of any present situation over a course of action, and, this structuring, at the same time, is a function of the action itself. Thus, I attend very closely to what Garfinkel calls "inner time", i.e., the "inner time" of remembrance, anticipation, and expectancy.

There are, however, other sorts of activities which I, and other blind persons, engage in in our daily lives which, to say the least, render problematic the concept of passing. It is to these activities and to the issues that they raise that I now turn.

CHAPTER IV

ACCOMPLISHING THE SIGHTED WORLD

The theme of the preceding chapter was passing considered as an active device for information control. That is, passing is an activity I engage in in order to construct, sustain, maintain, and manage appropriate, acceptable, and expectable social interaction.

In this chapter I will present some data, the analysis of which will render the foregoing analysis somewhat confusing and ambiguous. This confusion and ambiguity, as will be shown, emerges from the discovery that discredited persons are, in a sense, involved in passing.[17] In other words, I am involved in interaction and encounters with others where these others are aware of my blindness. Further, other blind persons, including totally blind persons, are involved in interaction and encounters with others in situations and occasions where their blindness is immediately perceivable.

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[17] Even though, in his model of passing, Goffman suggests that discredited persons are, at some time or another, involved in passing, this passing is not done in "public places". (Goffman, 1963:74) Thus, discredited persons pass in such situations as "letter writing", "telephone conversations", and the like.

Confusion and ambiguity arises, with respect to the concept of passing, in those interactional occasions where a person's blindness is immediately perceivable, or otherwise known, to those with whom he or she interacts. That is, in those interactional occasions, despite the immediate perceivability or knowledge of their blindness by others, blind persons still engage in passing. It should be stressed, however, that this passing is not an attempt, on the part of blind persons, to conceal their blindness.

For example, before I arrived at the University of British Columbia, I informed my potential professors that I was a blind person. Upon my arrival at U.B.C., I spoke at great length with my professors about my blindness, particularly since I intended to do research in the area of blindness. Further, upon my arrival, I informed many of the graduate students about my blindness.

Given that several of the persons with whom I interact "know" that I am, in a socio-legal sense, a blind person, I would now like to re-examine, on the basis of new data, my passing occasions and management devices.

Since I am not able to see well enough to be able to recognize persons in terms of knowing what their faces look like, it is necessary for me to use other evidences for establishing recognition. The evidences I typically use are as follows:

(1) a person's perceived height and weight - I use these indices to formulate a person's general appearance,

(2) a person's typical body postures - I come to attribute a unique appearance to individuals based on the way they typically stand, sit, walk, as well as the gestures they typically use during face-to-face interaction,

(3) a person's typical style of dress - I arrive at an understanding of what a person typically wears, i.e., in certain instances specific clothing, and in other instances, a general style of clothing,

(4) a person's "distinguishing features" - for example, beards, glasses, colour of hair (light or dark), length of hair (short or long), typical hairstyle, and so on.

(5) a person's voice - simply, what the person

"sounds like" (the most consistent and accurate of all of my "person identifying" criteria).

Since it takes some time before I can succesfully determine these "identifying points" about persons I have recently met, I am not able to make positive recognition of persons for approximately the first month or two of consistent interaction. In other words, it takes me that long to come to "see" and "know" a person's voice, style of dress, style of walking, etc.

Therefore, I usually try to ensure that I will receive as many pieces of evidence about the identity of a person as is possible. For example, when I walk past a person in the hallway of the Socio-Linguistics Lab at U.B.C., and that person greets me with a "Good morning" or "hello", and if on those bases of appearance and voice, I am not able to make positive identification, I will not typically return their greeting with a "Good morning" or a "hello". Instead, I will return their greeting in a manner so as to maximize the possibility of that person speaking again and thereby providing me with more evidence for making identification. I will typically use the return-greeting "Hello, how are you?", or simply, "How are you?" In most instances, this return-greeting (which is also a question) seems to elicit another piece of talk (an answer to the question). Thus, the person will reply with something like, "fine, how are you?". This "checking procedure", which typically elicits more talk from the person, enables me to make a more positive identification.

After a month or two of "being around a setting" I am able to more positively identify those persons within the setting. In other words, I will have come to make immediate and positive identification on the basis of the criteria I specified earlier. I also develop expectations about what persons are entitled to be in a specific setting. That is, I come to "know" who is most likely to be in that particular setting.

Moreover, I also know that the persons who are most likely to be in that setting are persons who are connected, just as I am, with that setting. Therefore, I am entitled to know that person, and more than likely, have been introduced to that person. One of the ways I receive the people in that setting is that "I know them and they know me". Thus, when I meet a person in that setting I take it that they are entitled to greet me and I am entitled and expected to greet them. Of course, I take the converse to be true as well.

One of the physical characteristics of the Sociology Department is a long hallway with offices and other rooms on either side of it. There have been many occasions where I have begun walking down the hallway from one end and have seen another person walking toward me from the other end of the hallway. The distance between us prevents me from making an immediate positive identification of that person. Yet, as I have mentioned, I receive any person in that hallway, for the most part, as a person who I am entitled to know. Thus, not only am I entitled to greet that person and to expect a return-greeting, but that I will greet that person is an expectable occurrence. In other words, if I walked by that person without acknowledging (by greeting) the fact that I am entitled to know that person and that that person is entitled to know me, the outcome would be some sort of an undesireable event.

For example, the other person will have to come to understand why I did not greet him or her. Furthermore, a non-greeting when a greeting is an expectable occurrence, is typically treated by persons as a "snub". That is, it is possible that my non-greeting would be treated as an unwarranted snub. I, therefore, find it necessary to minimize the possibility of my action being received by others as a "snub".

There is an obvious solution to this problem, namely, for me to do the greeting first and thus to provide an interactional occasion where the other is entitled and expected to do a return-greeting. Even though, on the surface, this seems like a plausible solution, it does have certain risks.

For example, although the person at the other end of the hallway is received by me as an entitled member of that setting, i.e., a professor, or a graduate student, or a clerical staff member, an acquaintance of mine, the possibility still exists that that person may be a "stranger" to the setting. The person at the other end of the hallway may be an undergraduate student coming to meet with a professor, or, a maintenance person, or the like, in which case, a greeting would not be interactionally appropriate. This is not to suggest that if I did greet this person the interactional occasion would collapse, but, the person, given that we were not acquainted, would have to in some way or another remedy the indexical properties of my greeting. Thus, I may be considered, by that person, as a cheerful person, some kind of nut, etc.

Thus, to minimize such interpretations, especially the latter type, I typically utilize, in such situations, what I consider to be an appropriate nonverbal greeting. I make use of the "smile". I take it that a smile can function in several ways. I understand that it can be used as a greeting between two acquainted persons as they pass in a hallway. Further, I know that a smile is an indication of friendliness, given the features of the setting. That is, it is interactionally appropriate for strangers to exchange smiles while walking by one another in an otherwise unpopulated hallway. The smile is, at least for my purposes, more interactionally appropriate and less interactionally risky than a verbal greeting.

The "smile" is particularly useful in facilitating passing and in the demonstration of my interactional competence. For example, whenever I leave or return to my residence I pass by my neighbour's kitchen window. (I consider my neighbours as friends of mine and they are aware of my blindness.) Very frequently, my neighbour is in the kitchen and can see who is passing by the window. I know this for several reasons, for example, my neighbour has often called out a greeting to me from the window as I pass by. In colder weather, however, the window is not open and my neighbour will do a greeting to passersby, with whom she is acquainted, by waving. I know this because when my wife and I walk by our neighbour's window, my wife will wave to our neighbour on those occasions when our neighbour is looking out the window. However, when I am walking by the window alone, I am not able to tell whether or not our neighbour is looking out. Therefore, I do not know whether or not a greeting or a return-greeting (a wave) is appropriate.

It is in such situations that I utilize the "smile". Everytime I walk by the window, I "look" toward the window and "smile". Again, the smile is interactionally appropriate and sufficient to do a greeting or return-greeting. A wave, on the other hand, although appropriate if our neighbour is looking out the window, is not appropriate if there is no one at the window. In other words. it is possible for other persons on the street to "see" me waving at no one. A smile, however, even if there is no one there to smile at, may not be noticed by other persons and, if noticed, can be interpreted in several ways, for example, "He thought of something funny", and so on.

In a sense, then, I am engaged in passing even in those situations where my blindness is known to others. In these situations, my passing is not so much an attempt to conceal something, namely, my blindness, but rather, is more an attempt to "display" something, namely, my knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the paramount reality - the "sighted world". In order for me, or any other blind person, to achieve this "display" it is necessary to orient to "sightedness".

The data presented here shows that and how I "see" and "report", in other words, account[18] for my activities within the context of the commonly-understood-taken-for-granted world. This world has, as one of its seen but unnoticed background understandings and as one of its taken-for-granted constituent features, the phenomenon of "sightedness".

"Sightedness", however, is not a feature of the everyday world which is oriented to by most persons. Sudnow suggests that:

> Not only is it the case that persons seem able to "formulate" features of another's appearance, of a scene, gesture, etc., "at a glance" - as the successful occurrence of a wide variety of interactional sequences attests - but for many interactional sequences there seems to exist a requirement for interpretation with "no more than a glance", and, in many situations, with no more than a single glance. (Sudnow, 1972: 259-260)

At the conclusion of his paper, and in the form of a recommended study policy, Sudnow goes on to say that:

> It would seem that a fundamental set of tasks confronts students of nonverbal behaviour -

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[18] I follow Garfinkel's usage of the concept "account" (Garfinkel, 1967:1-34) and Hill and Crittenden, eds., 1968:9).

> namely, the investigations of the ways interactional environments establish activity relevancies and how, in turn, the relevant collections of alternative activity formulations in some setting constrain both the kinds of appearance production work that go on and the kinds of monitoring procedures that are employed in that setting. (Sudnow, 1972:279)

The fact that persons are able to "at a glance" categorize, on every occasion of their observed and displayed occurrence, the status of contexted scenes and events, turns on the taken-for-granted and seen but unnoticed background understanding of sight. In other words, to glance or to be glanced at, or otherwise to look or be looked at, one must assume that he or she "sees" what and how others "see" and assume that others assume this of him or her. The fact that people do "see", i.e., have "sight", is a taken-for-granted constituent feature of the everyday world which is not explicitly oriented to by most persons.

On the other hand, I, and other blind persons, do not take "sightedness" for granted. Even though I "see" and "report" the same world that others "see" and "report", namely, the "sighted world", in order to "see" and "report" a "sighted world" I must and do orient to "sightedness".

This orientation consists of my attending to "sightedness" as recognizable on-going courses of action, the productions of which are ensured and recognizable consequentially. I do not receive the phenomenon of sight as an obvious, factual, taken-for-granted physiological phenomenon, but rather, as a "cultural event" recognizable and produced only through actual witnessed displays of common talk and conduct.

On many occasions, therefore, my passing is not so much an attempt to conceal my blindness, but rather, is a "method" whereby I "see" and "report" a commonly-understood-taken-for-granted world and a "method" whereby I make this "seeing" and "reporting" "visible" to others.

For example, I have often attended sports events, such as ice hockey games, with friends who are perfectly aware that I am a blind person. They are aware, for instance, that I am unable to "see" and distinguish one player from another. They are also aware that I am not able to "see" the puck during the course of the game. Further, I am not able to "see" whether the puck is being passed from one player to another or shot toward the net in an attempt to score.

There are, however, certain occurrences that I understand and take as documents and evidences of a goal being scored. For example, when a goal is scored there is a loud sound which is created when the puck hits the metal bars of the goal net. In and of itself, however, this sound is not evidence enough that a goal has been scored, because the puck may have hit the outside of the metal posts of the net and not actually have gone into the net. If, on the other hand, this sound is immediately followed by a tremendous cheer from the spectators I know that a goal has been scored and I can react in the acceptable and expectable manner immediately after I have "recognized" the documents of a goal.

It may, in fact, be that many of the other spectators do not actually "see" the puck go into the net but use the same sorts of occurrences that I do in order to "see" a goal being scored. Whether or not this is the case, the crucial point is that the "normally sighted spectators" are able to "report" that either they did, or at least, could have "seen" the puck enter the net, whereas, I am able to report that the puck did go into the net due to my observations of the occurrences of certain documents and evidences.

The rest of the spectators' claims to "have seen" or to "have been able to see" the goal being scored is a claim which is not different from my claim. That is, my passing informs my friends that "if I had 'normal vision' I too would have been able to 'see' the puck enter the net". Thus, I display my understanding, knowledge, and acceptance of the paramount reality, the "sighted world".

In this sense, my passing is qualitatively different from the sort of passing engaged in by Agnes. That is, when my passing is "found out" or when I inform others that I am engaged in passing and inform them of some of my passing techniques and management devices, they typically take my passing activity as being reasonable and sensible. In other words, in some instances, I can and do assume that others would "view" my position in, for all practical purposes, an identical way, were we to exchange positions.[19] For Agnes, however, the taken-for-granted assumption of the "reciprocity of perspectives" was not operative.

Members typically view blindness as a misfortunate "happening". Further, they view blindness as a "happening" which could "happen" to them. Thus, members can and do speculate on what they would do "if they went blind", or, if they were in my position. For Agnes, however, this was not the case. Members typically view sexedness dichotomously, that is, a person is either a male or a female. Further members "happen" to be either male or female, i.e., they are "born" either male or female. Therefore, members can speculate on how their lives would be different if they were "born" the opposite sex. However, to have been "born" male and, at some latter point, to assume the position of female, is not typically considered by members as a natural, normal "happening", but rather, as an "election". Thus, members do not typically speculate on what it would be like to choose to be the opposite sex, that is, members do not speculatively change positions with Agnes.

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[19] The taken-for-granted assumption of the "reciprosity of perspectives" was not received by me as operative at all times. For example, I did not receive this assumption as operative during my teen years.

My passing, on the other hand, is often received by others as an attempt on my part to "accept" my handicap. This understanding of my passing by others is evident in the "method" I employ to achieve face-to-face interaction.

During conversation with others, I attempt to "look" directly into the eyes of the person with whom I am speaking. This presents some difficulty for me, since, I have a spot within my visual field which is completely "blacked out", in other words, I have no vision in this particular area. Therefore, I must "look around" this area or "focus this area out of the way" in order to be able to "see". Thus, in order to actually "see" an individual's face, it will appear as though I am "looking past" the individual because I am actually "looking around" this blacked out area. If, however, I focus this blacked out area directly on to the person's face, it will appear as though I am looking into the eyes, or at least into the face, of the person with whom I am conversing. In other words, when a person's face does not appear within my visual field, I can be fairly confident that it appears as though I am "looking" at the person with whom I am interacting. Put more succinctly, I "know" that I am "looking" at a person's face when I do not "see" that person's face.

This activity is typically received by others (others who are aware of it) as a reasonable and sensible thing to do. It is a display of my knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of a commonly understood method for conducting conversation in a "sighted world".

"Looking toward the voice of the person to whom one is speaking" is an activity which blind persons typically engage in and attempt to master. In fact, it is a method which is taught to blind persons by rehabilitation staff at the C.N.I.B.

Blind persons typically derive a great deal of satisfaction from being able to carry this conversation procedure off. For example, a totally blind woman told me that, while she was engaged in a multi-party conversation, she "looked" toward the voice of one of the persons and asked that person a question. The person then answered her question. To her satisfaction, however, the person did not preface the answer with a "Were you speaking to me". In other words, much to her satisfaction, and delight, she had carried off and successfully achieved "doing normal talking".

This display of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the paramount reality, the "sighted world", is achieved by blind persons in many ways. For instance, blind persons, even congenitally totally blind persons, do not typically act, especially in public places, as though they "receive" their perception of the world as "reality". In other words, they orient to the world as a "sighted world" and do not orient to the world as a "blind world".

For example, blind persons use facilities such as window shades in their homes to prevent others from "looking" in. They do not typically perform socially inappropriate bodily functions, nor do they manipulate certain areas of their body when they are in public places. Blind persons typically wear clothing, even on those days where warmth and protection from the elements is not a concern, in order to prevent others from "seeing" certain culturally restricted areas of their body.

In a physiological sense at least, then, blind persons "perceive" and "see" a world which is different from that of sighted persons. Yet, to blind persons the world is not dichotomously organized, i.e., there is not an objective, rational, and sensible world for sighted persons and a different objective, rational, and sensible world for blind persons. Sighted persons, through their accounting practices, come to "see" and to "report" the world as sensible, as rational, and as objective. There is no doubt that, in a sense, blind persons "see" and "receive" the world differently from sighted persons. However, blind persons typically "receive" their perceptions of the world as an invalid and wrong perception of the "sighted world". Thus, blind persons passing is not so much an activity whereby their blindness is concealed or kept secret, although this certainly does occur, but rather, their passing is an activity whereby their knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and deference to the "sighted world" as the "real-sensible-rational-objective-world" is displayed. Put differently, blind persons accept and treat the "sighted world" with deference as it is constituted and presented to them by "sighted persons".

That blind persons do display their knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to the "sighted world" is further locatable in everyday occurrences of talk. For example, I have already mentioned that many blind persons, including totally blind persons, will "look" toward the voice of the person with whom they are speaking.

On many occasions of interaction between blind and sighted persons, blind persons make use of words which I shall call "sighted words". For instance, blind persons use such words as "look" and "see". Further, they will also use such phrases as "I haven't seen you for a long time", "See you later", "I was watching television last night", "I've been looking for you for a week", and so on. Blind persons typically make use of "sighted words" to talk about and report on scenes, activities, and events of everyday life. For example, during a conversation, in which I was a participant, a congenitally totally blind adult described a car accident that he was "witness" to. Several sighted persons were also participants in this same conversation. The blind person not only claimed to have "been witness" to the car accident, but also, described the car accident in vivid visual detail. He described the intersection at which the accident took place, described the angle from which the cars were approaching, described the angle at which the cars collided, described where both cars ended up after the collision, described the extent damage done to each car, and where on the car, the damage was done, and so on.

Not only was the blind person displaying his knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to the "sighted world" by using "sighted words", but also, the car accident could only be described within the understanding of a "sighted world". That is, for that blind person to have described the car accident as he "actually" experienced it would have meant the utilization of a "reporting" mode which was not available either to him or to his co-conversationalists. In order to report the car accident as he "experienced it" would involve the utilization of some sort of "presighted" mode of not only "reporting" but "seeing". In other words, by employing his other senses, talking to those present during the car accident, listening to the comments of those who were present during the car accident, and so on, this blind person "saw" and "reported" a car accident as it occurred within a commonly-understood-taken-for-granted-sighted-world.

Thus, for blind persons, passing is a way not only to display knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to the "sighted world", but, passing is also at least one of the ways whereby blind persons "see" and "report" a sensible, reasonable, world.

Even though the use of "sighted words" is considered by many people, both blind and sighted, as a more "normal" way for blind persons to interact, there are some occasions where the use of such words produces an interesting phenomenon. This is most clearly exemplified in interaction occasions where a sighted person, for the first time, encounters a totally blind person. I have observed numerous occasions like this and have had occasions like this described to me by both blind and sighted persons.

During such encounters sighted persons typically experience discomfort. At least one source of this discomfort revolves around the use of "sighted words". Sighted persons typically find it odd that blind persons would use such words as "see", "look", and would say such things as "I saw your brother yesterday", or See you later". Further, sighted persons typically feel awkward and uncomfortable when they themselves, during the course of conversations with blind persons, use such words. Frequently, sighted persons make a conscious effort to avoid using such words or when such avoidance does not come off they typically apologize to the blind person. It seems that during such interaction words and phrases such as "look", "see", "from my point of view", "from my perspective", and so on, lose their contextual meaning. For example, to say "do you see my point" during a conversation where one person is attempting to express an idea or thought to another person, "see" has virtually nothing to do with the physiological processes of sight. Yet, during interaction between a blind person and a sighted person, especially where the sighted person encounters a blind person for the first time, the word "see", regardless of its contextual background, seems to take on an exclusively physiological meaning. In other words, the context is stripped away and the word "see", then, becomes a reference to the fact that the blind person cannot, in a physiological sense, "see". Such a process is even more dramatically explicated when such an utterance as "see you later" is spoken.

These feelings of discomfort and awkwardness during interaction, where "sighted words" are used, are by no means restricted to sighted persons. Blind persons, especially newly blinded persons, also experience such feelings. Many persons, who have experienced total sight loss during adulthood, have told me that they have experienced extreme difficulty in using "sighted words". Thus, newly blinded persons also typically experience such words as "see" in their physiological sense. Further, newly blinded persons "perceive" themselves as no longer a member of the collectivity "sighted persons", and therefore, no longer entitled to use "sighted words".

This phenomenon does not typically occur in the case of "seasoned" blind persons. In fact, blind persons, who have been blind for some time, "see" discomfort on the part of sighted persons, with respect to "sighted word usage", as humourous, a lack of understanding on the part of the sighted person, or an instance of discrimination on the part of the sighted person. That is, it frequently happens that blind persons "see" themselves as entitled members of sighted society and receive such discomfort, on the part of sighted persons, as an instance of, or more correctly, a document of the sighted society's unwillingness to accept them as legitimate, bona fide members of the sighted collectivity.

The perceived discomfort surrounding the use of "sighted words" during initial encounters between blind persons and sighted persons is, of course, not restricted to totally blind persons. For instance, I have noticed this discomfort in some of my experiences.

There are, for example, instances where I find it necessary to prospectively instruct certain persons that I am a "legally blind person". These instances are characterized by the eventual discovery of my blindness by those persons, or, where I find it necessary for those persons to know about my blindness for other reasons. For example, I informed my professors about the fact I am blind. Informing professors about my blindness has, for me, distinct advantages. That is, I can then make special arrangements for the writing of tests and examinations. Furthermore, since all of my reading materials have to be put onto taped recordings, it is necessary for me to know, in plenty of time, what the specific course reading lists are. By informing the professors of my blindness I can more expediently resolve such issues.

In some instances, I inform my professors about my blindness before an actual face-to-face meeting takes place. That is, I inform them by letter or by telephone and typically, at the same time, I arrange to meet them privately. I typically receive these initial meetings as being, at least to some degree, awkward and uncomfortable. The professors are never sure how much I can "see". When directing me into their homes or offices, they ask "Can you manage", or, "Are you alright", etc. This sort of caution on the part of the professor usually dissipates shortly after our initial meeting. As I have alreading mentioned, another feature of this initial meeting is the awkwardness surrounding the use of "sighted words". Professors, especially social scientists, typically "handle" this awkwardness in a very interesting manner. Part of what is discussed in our initial meeting is that I have made "blindness" a topic of my study. This, presumably, provides the professor and I with a resource for remedying the indexical particulars of "sighted talk". Both the professor and I typically couch the discomfort of "sighted talk" within some sort of social science perspective. That is, when such a phrase as "From this perspective", or, "From this point of view", "appears" during our conversation, we both comment on how "fascinating" and "interesting" it is that such phrases can be used by blind persons and how such phrases can be the source of discomfort in sighted-blind person interaction.

Despite the discomfort and awkwardness of "sighted talk" it seems to be necessary and expectable that blind persons will do "sighted talk". And, even though as I have shown, "sighted talk" is at least one source of discomfort in sighted-blind person interaction, it's deliberate avoidance does not alleviate this discomfort. Moreover, this avoidance operates as a further source of discomfort.

For example, for a blind person to say "I heard television last night" rather than "I watched television last night" does not provide for a common understanding of television, i.e., a common understanding with respect to a blind person and a sighted person commonly understanding what "watching television" entails. Thus, for a blind person to say "I heard television last night" is to imply, at least to some degree, or at least to provide for the possibility that the blind person is not aware that a television possesses a picture which is visually available to most persons.

The legitimacy of "sighted talk" is evident in other interactional occasions. For instance, when a blind person wants to examine an object that is immediately available to a sighted person, the blind person will not typically say "Let me feel that", but rather, will say "Let me see that". It is clear, in this instance, to both interactants that the blind person will not physiologically "see" the object, but that the blind person will "see" the object via the physiological sense of "touch". Further, by using the word "see", the blind person provides for his or her understanding that the object is available for examination by sight. In short, "sighted talk", on the part of a blind person, provides for and displays his or her knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to the paramount reality, namely, the "sighted world".

"Sightedness" then, is a taken-for-granted-constituent feature of everyday life that is oriented to and produced by blind persons. This production, of course, turns on the blind person's recognition that everyday talk and conduct is everyday "sighted" talk and conduct.

Blind persons also make use of various other features of talk while engaged in face-to-face interaction with sighted others. These features consist of gestures and other non-verbal behaviour. I have already mentioned how blind persons "look" toward the voice of the person to whom they are speaking. I have observed on several occasions blind persons making use of various other gestures while engaged in conversation with sighted others. For example, while using talk to formulate an idea or concept, blind persons will frequently use appropriate gestures. Thus, when a blind person suggests that it is "really cold outside" he or she will often cross his or her arms, hold them in tightly toward their body, and tremble slightly. This serves to give sighted others a visual display of coldness and it also displays that the blind person is aware that his or her appearances are visually available to sighted others.

Another occasion on which I observed blind persons using gestures, as a feature of talk, to do "sightedness", was when a totally blind person addressed an audience of sighted persons. During her speech, this totally blind woman, did not "appear" to "look" in one direction. Instead, she moved her head slowly from side to side. She also held her head "focused" in one direction for a few seconds and then moved it to "refocus" it in another direction. These head motions continued throughout the course of her speech. It was obvious to me, and presumably obvious to others in the audience, that she was doing what it would be expected that anyone would do during the occasion of delivering a speech. She was aware that she was in front of an audience and that that audience was "looking" at her. She was also aware that public speakers do not typically "look" at one person in the audience when they deliver their speech, but rather, they shift their gaze and, hence, their head and eyes in various directions so as to give the "appearance" of addressing the entire audience. In other words, this blind woman was "looking" at everyone in the audience while delivering her speech. In short, she was bringing to bear her recognition and subsequent production of "sightedness" in order to do "delivering a speech".

In sum, it is not the point that I, or any other blind person, "perceives" himself or herself as living in a world which is different from the world in which sighted persons live. It is the point that I, and all other blind persons, live within a world which we "perceive" and "receive" as "sighted". To display this acceptance of the paramount reality, i.e., the "sighted world", I, and all other blind persons, in varying degrees, must recognize and produce "sightedness" and must attempt to make this production recognizable to others as "sightedness". The degree to which this latter recognition is achieved, I would argue, will determine to what degree a blind person's claims to bona fide membership in society will be legitimately received by others.

In this chapter I have presented some data which is markedly different from the data presented in the preceding chapter. The data I presented in the preceding chapter suggested that, for some of the time, blind persons are involved in passing in order to conceal their blindness from others. Further, the concept of passing, as formulated by Goffman and Garfinkel, provided an effective conceptual basis within which to frame this phenomenon.

However, the data presented in this chapter does not appear to be effectively framed within the passing concept. The apparent discrepancies between the phenomenon of passing and the data presented in this chapter can be characterized as follows.

(1) Despite a person's blindness being immediately perceivable by others, or otherwise known by others, blind persons still engage in an activity which, in some sense, can be characterized as passing.

(2) According to both Goffman and Garfinkel, if a person's social stigma is immediately perceivable, or otherwise known to others, they are not engaged in passing. That is, passing is an activity engaged in by those persons who are attempting to conceal information, which they receive as discrediting, from others.

(3) According to Goffman and Garfinkel, if a person's passing activity is "found out" simultaneously exposing that person's discrediting information, the result is "social ruin".

(4) When blind persons engage in a sense, in passing, even though their blindness is immediately perceivable, or otherwise known to others, "social ruin" is not a consequence.

These discrepancies or incongruities between the concept of passing and the data presented in this chapter raise some serious questions with respect to the concept of passing. First, given the data presented in this chapter, is passing still an appropriate concept within which this data can be framed? In other words, can the activity of blind persons, as presented in this chapter, be considered as passing? Secondly, is passing a method whereby blind persons achieve a commonly understood, taken-for-granted, reasonable, sensible world as it is constituted and presented to them by sighted persons? And finally, is passing an activity engaged in both blind and sighted persons as a method to formulate their "experiences" within a framework of a commonly-understood-taken-for-granted-world? Is the concept passing, as is the concept socialization, a "gloss" for the ways all persons, be they blind or sighted, socially interact and the methods whereby such social interaction is accomplished? What is required, then, is a re-examination of the concept "passing" with respect to its constituent features as they are displayed by members, be they blind or sighted.

What is clear, however, is that blind persons orient to "sightedness", i.e., to "sighted persons" as "cultural events". Sighted persons typically take sightedness for granted as a commonly understood, seen but unnoticed background expectancy of everyday life. Blind persons, on the other hand, "see and notice" sightedness, seek to recognize its production and seek to produce sightedness as a commonly understood taken-for-granted "fact" of everyday life. Further, blind persons employ methods and procedures whereby they display their knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to the paramount reality, namely, the "sighted world", as it is constituted and presented to them by sighted persons.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The foregoing is an attempt to treat a physiologically locatable event, namely, blindness, as a social phenomenon. In doing so, I have also attempted to show that "sightedness", also a physiologically locatable event, is oriented to by blind persons as a "cultural event".

In Chapter I I attempted to demonstrate that the socialization model, a model conventionally used to frame studies of blindness, is neither a theoretically appropriate model nor is it a model within which the actual everyday activities of blind persons is accurately described. Instead, the socialization model "glosses" the very phenomenon that it seeks to explicate, namely, "how" blind persons interact in a "sighted world".

In Chapter III I presented some data which I attempted to frame within the concept of "passing" as it is formulated by Goffman and extended and elaborated by Garfinkel. Even though some of blind persons' everyday activities can be effectively framed within this "passing" concept, data presented in Chapter IV raised some serious questions with respect to the concept of "passing". These questions spring from the apparent discrepancies and incongruities between the data presented in Chapter IV and the concept of "passing".

Clearly, however, blind persons do employ methods and procedures whereby they display their knowledge of, understanding of, acceptance of, and deference to a "sighted world" which is constituted and presented to them by sighted others. I have attempted, in the foregoing, to explicate some of these methods and procedures. In sum, then, this investigation of blindness suggests that members, be they blind or sighted, produce via their practices and activities alone the accountable normality of "sighted person" and do so only in actual occasions through actual witnessed displays of common talk and conduct.

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