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EMBARRASSMENT  
AND A  
SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY

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This study provides a basic orientation for developing a "sociology of the body" from an analysis of embarrassment phenomena. The primary objective is to give emphasis to the contention that the role of the actor's awareness of his body during the course of social transactions has been undeservedly neglected as a subject of sociological inquiry. This is particularly evident with respect to sociological investigations into the dynamics of embarrassment. A number of arguments exposing limitations, problems and inconsistencies in those investigations are entertained for the purpose of illustrating that many themes of body involvement reflecting bodily organizational procedures have not been considered when in fact they appear to be intimately related to the experience and recognition of embarrassment.

Bodily organizational procedures are specified in a concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment paradigm which examines the significance of body awareness to encounters involving episodes of embarrassment. This paradigm reveals that the actor assigns a great importance to his ability to maintain control of bodily features in accordance with standards that conform to the expectations of significant others. A theoretical discussion is provided to account for the nature of this importance. It is concluded from this discussion that many factors underlying issues of social acceptance and rejection are integral to the concern for the management of bodily control.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history we can find numerous examples of persons inferring psychological characteristics and social identities from physiognomic features or body appearance. One can find in the writings of Aristotle<sup>1</sup> discussions of the apparent relationships between bodily structure and social character. During the Middle Ages a person with some disfigurement was generally distrusted or suspected of being a criminal. Salem witch trials were infamous for their persecution of persons who displayed atypical body markings. In our enlightened times, the possessor of a large nose may be assigned to an unpopular minority group. Long hair and a beard is likely to evoke the stereotype of hippy. Pimples and blemishes are typically identified with physical immaturity and a receding chin is often associated with weakness or effeminacy in males.

It is surprising that *a person's awareness of his body appearance and performance has not been given serious sociological consideration.* Issues such as: When does a child first become aware of others reactions to his body? How do body parts acquire meaning? Are there social situations in which body awareness is especially prominent? Can we establish the existence of regulations governing the extent to which a person can introduce his body experiences and awareness into his talk? To what extent does culture conventionalize how we attend to our body?

One's awareness of body is a dominant theme in the writings of Merleau-Ponty.<sup>2</sup> He has marshalled convincing arguments to show that we



experience a clearly articulated area of space which introduces order and meaning into our object relationships. This space is our body; it "Superimposes upon physical space a potential or human space" which provides a background for experience and a line of stability for perception. That is to say, it is the subjectivity of our body which gives meaning to our existence; or as Merleau-Ponty puts it "The meaning makes the subject be and the subject constitutes the meaning." *It is this human space we call body through which we experience our identity and a sense of existence.* Thus, by experiencing one's body, one experiences the self.

Milton Ehrlich<sup>3</sup> in drawing attention to the fundamental importance of body awareness in our everyday life experiences has astutely pointed out that we act not only as personalities but we act with our bodies. How conscious are we of our body when it is acting for others? The following passage illustrates perhaps what we could view as extreme body consciousness:

A young woman is walking down a city street. She is excruciatingly aware of her appearance and of the reaction to it (imagined or real) of every person she meets. She walks through a group of construction workers who are eating lunch in a line along the pavement. Her stomach tightens with terror and revulsion; her face becomes contorted into a grimace of self-control and fake unawareness; her walk and carriage become stiff and dehumanized.<sup>4</sup>

This passage rather exaggeratedly points out how prominent body awareness can actually become in certain social encounters. A sociological explanation of why body awareness should be so prominent, ostensibly would seek to relate the body awareness to the person's everyday

organizational philosophy: a philosophy that has as its basic tenet the belief that appearance and body action provide others with a visible manifestation of the intended self.

Many everyday actions such as walking, talking, opening a door or eliminating body wastage require an ability to control one's environment with complex motor competency. In our society we attempt to invest this competency with *the quality of coolness* or "the capacity to execute physical acts, including conversation in a smooth, self-controlled fashion . . ."<sup>5</sup> We could say that coolness represents an impression of the self that one is completely in control of one's body--competency has been perfected. In fact, upon examination we find that much of what we commonly refer to as self-control is simply body control. More importantly to be concerned about coolness would suggest an awareness of body performance and appearance.

Embarrassment has been recognized by some sociologists as the chief nemesis of coolness. In other words, to lose one's cool can be an invitation to embarrassment. A close cousin to blowing one's cool is to lose face. Goffman<sup>6</sup> treats face as the need to appear capable in the performance of social skills. *To lose face is to look foolish in front of others.* Persons will often speak of going to elaborate extremes to save face and avoid the unpleasant reality of embarrassment. Both the loss of face and cool imply body involvement. Indeed, the phrase loss of face is suggestive of body destructiveness. In view of these considerations it would seem reasonable to assume that embarrassment phenomena--which can disrupt coolness and eventuate in a loss of face--are linked

to our concern and awareness of how our body actions and appearance are being received by others; and the sort of organizational procedures governing the presentation of body in everyday life. It may be that embarrassment is an expression of incompetency in the enactment of these procedures.

Harvey Sacks,<sup>7</sup> in referring briefly to the sociological status of the possibility of embarrassment has glibly noted "To be observable is to be embarrassable." In making this observation he is speaking of the biblical account of man's first human encounter with God which begins with embarrassment. Man is suddenly confronted with his nakedness; others are observing this nakedness and he is embarrassed. Perhaps we could say *to be embarrassable is to be concerned about body presentation.*

Previous theoretical and experimental studies into the dynamics of embarrassment have tended to limit their treatment of embarrassment to the items responsible for its production. Generally it is viewed as an indicator of inadequate role performance or as the resultant of lost self-esteem. Regretfully, none of these studies have considered the potential advantages that could be realized through an analysis of what embarrassment phenomena may reveal about our involvement with the body and its appearance in everyday social encounters.

I am suggesting that such analysis that has as its focus the apparent linkage between involvement with the body and the experience of embarrassment could facilitate the implementation of a sociology of the body: it would be a sociology that addresses itself to the types of

neglected concerns we entertained in our opening statements.

It is the intention of this thesis to provide support for this suggestion. We shall undertake an investigation of *how the experience and recognition of embarrassment is tied in with our attitudes, values, experiences and organizational procedures regarding how we present our bodies to others in everyday life*. We will not be concerned with what is required to produce embarrassment; but rather with its signification to the way we are involved with our body when interacting with others.

We shall begin our investigation in the opening chapter with a detailed examination of the linkage between body involvement and embarrassment phenomena and its possible dimensions as revealed in the previously conducted embarrassment studies. That is to say, it will involve considering certain problems, limitations and inconsistencies contained in those studies insofar as they direct our attention to body involvement and presentation. Another way of expressing this would be to say that we initially will attempt to delineate the concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment phenomena. Once this is established we shall address ourself to its ramifications for a sociology of the body.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle challenges the arguments of three physiognomic theories proposed by the ancients; and then offers his own. Aristotle, *Physionomica*, in *Works of Aristotle*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty gives the body a being-the-condition-for-objects and not a being-as-an-object because of its intimacy with consciousness through which all meaning arises. This can be found in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (London: Oxford Press, 1962).

<sup>3</sup>Milton P. Ehrlich, "The Role of Body Experience in Therapy," *The Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 57, 1970, 181-95.

<sup>4</sup>Meredith Tax, "Woman and Her Mind: The Story of Everyday Life" in *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation, Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*, ed. Shulamith Firestone, 1970, pp. 10-16.

<sup>5</sup>Definition provided by Stanford M. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott in their *A Sociology of the Absurd* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), p. 145.

<sup>6</sup>For an extensive treatment of this concept see Erving Goffman's *Interactional Ritual* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

<sup>7</sup>Harvey Sacks, *A Method for Warrantably Inferring Moral Character*. Unpublished mimeographed paper, p. 1.

CHAPTER I

DEFINING THE CONCERN-FOR-BODY DIMENSION  
OF EMBARRASSMENT

Goffman's dramaturgical paradigm has provided the theoretical framework for most of the sociological embarrassment research. This model proposes an understanding of the features sustaining social interaction by viewing social reality as analogous to theatrical performances. In social encounters individuals engage in dramatic performances to manage impressions of the self. Goffman locates the cause of embarrassment in an individual's rejection or invalidation of the self-impressions of another. In effect it is the acknowledgment of an inadequate performance that causes embarrassment in the person whose self-impressions have been rejected. He remarks: "Whatever else, embarrassment has to do with the figure the individual cuts before others felt to be there at the time. The crucial concern is the impression one makes on others . . ."<sup>1</sup>

There are certain problems that arise from the treatment of social interaction with the analogy of actors on a stage continually searching for dramaturgical support. The most important being that it does not provide an explanation of why social actors will accept some impressions of the proffered self while rejecting others. Concomitantly, Gouldner<sup>2</sup> in a recent criticism of the Goffmanian perspective adds that the dramaturgical paradigm fails to disclose why some selves (the flimsiest ones) are presented and some (the most authentic ones) are not.

The weakness in Goffman's model of man is that it does not give consideration to the actor's evaluation and attitude toward his own performance. Indeed, it would seem that the Goffman man is so preoccupied with the management of his facade that he has no time for true feelings of the self and its ontological autonomy. *He is continually performing for others.*

However, on closer inspection of the theatrical analogy we find that it does provide some insight into the proposed linkage between body involvement and embarrassment phenomena. For example, let us consider what is involved in staging dramatic presentations with respect to the strategies and techniques of the stage actors performance.

The stage actor must master the skill of creating illusions. If he is to be murdered in the play, he must marshal various convincing dramaturgical techniques to create the impression of being murdered. Other actors support him in creating the impression--also scenery and stage props are utilized to foster the illusion. But the most important feature in perfecting the credibility of his presentation is the management of his body. The following passage from a textbook on directing illustrates how demanding this management can be.

The actor stabbed should not fall immediately. He staggers a moment. He will help the illusion by grasping the part of the body . . . stabbed and by showing a definite reaction of agony as he sways and partially sinks. . . . If the fall is from the full standing position, the actor must be sure that the feet stay down on the floor and do not bounce up.<sup>3</sup>

Essentially, much of what Goffman views as managed impressions of the self is body management. The stage actor who inadvertently lets

his feet bounce up in the performance of the stabbing scene may create a comic effect which disrupts the dramatic mood and discredits his acting ability. According to Goffman such discrediting can result in embarrassment for the person whose self-impressions have been invalidated.

Goffman has classified body management in terms of rules of body idiom. Such rules provide directives for displaying body behaviour required in maintaining images of the self. He notes that a preliminary action undertaken before entering into a social encounter is a quick visual inspection of one's personal front. The necessity for this action rests upon the assumption that features such as body exposure, physical gestures, movement, cleanliness, posture and dress are labels of the projected self. They provide others with an image of one's self. Because the Goffman man is constantly performing for others these features are subject to continual modification. In fact, these modifications are an integral part of the action of negotiating a self on which the dramaturgical paradigm is founded. Consequently, the relationship between the self-image and corresponding bodily appearance and performance is treated almost exclusively in terms of a conflict model. This model shifts the focus of concern for this relationship away from the actor's attitude toward the correspondence. *The concern becomes one of interpreting how the correspondence facilitates the dissimulation and withholding of information that could unmask the staged self.* Hence, self-control is reduced to what we could describe as preventive body management. That is, the actor in exercising self-control is employing strategies of bodily appearance and action that prevent unmasking.



Gross and Stone elaborate on Goffman's treatment of self-control and preventive body management by proposing that embarrassment is probable "whenever some central assumption in a transaction has been unexpectedly and unqualifiedly discredited for at least one participant."<sup>4</sup> An additional condition that follows from the discrediting is that the embarrassed person is incapacitated in the performance of his role. The person who displays incompetency in role performance is generally considered deficient in his self-control ability. In fact, embarrassment is considered synonymous with such deficiency. This fosters a rather problematical bias: embarrassment phenomena are limited in their occurrence to events involving inadequate role performances.

Problems arise when we direct our attention to the factors responsible for the discrediting that supposedly eventuates in felt embarrassment. Gross and Stone suggest that these are:

- 1) not being able to confirm the identity being presented;
- 2) a loss of poise through failure to control the self or environmental props;
- 3) inappropriate definition of the situation.

First it is not safe to assume that the discrediting of some central assumption of an actor will insure the occurrence of felt embarrassment. For instance, hustling transsexuals on some occasions will be confronted with the problem of being solicited by unsuspecting tricks who naturally assume they have procured a female prostitute. The inevitable discovery will usually cause surprise or disgust; often it leads

to open hostility, in which case the transsexual emerges from the encounter severely beaten by the disgruntled procurer.<sup>5</sup> This forces the issue of why in some instances discrediting results in embarrassment; whereas on other occasions it does not. We cannot simply dismiss this issue by assuming that actors will on some occasions expect incapacities in role performances. A physically disabled person engaged in some sort of mechanical task may be prepared for eventual failures to manage environmental props or self-images. Obviously, it could be argued that the disabled person has incorporated the preparation for expected incapacities into his role performances. Thus the failures become an inherent feature of the physically disabled role.

One method of dealing with this apparent dilemma is to consider what is tacitly implied when theorists place what I consider to be an undue emphasis on actors committing situational improprieties as the antecedent of felt embarrassment. Situational improprieties are generally viewed as *transgressions of normative assumptions regarding conduct and appearance*. Usually, they are inadvertent and would include such things as loss of visceral control, forgetting a name or failing to shield an erection bulge; but they also can be intentional as in the case of a faux pas when actors have incorrectly defined the situation. Deprecating homosexuality when the listener happens to be a homophile would exemplify the latter.

Regardless of whether they are intentional or nonintentional, the important feature is that the actor has displayed incompetence in the enactment of certain social skills. Another way of expressing this

would be to say that *committing situational improprieties results in an actor losing face*. Goffman defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact."<sup>6</sup> It would follow from this definition that the losing of face is contingent upon the responses of others preventing the actor from claiming positive social value for the particular line of action he has undertaken. Consequently the etiological determinants of embarrassment would be located in the societal responses to the improprieties. The problem introduced by this sort of approach is that it relegates the actor's organization of attitudes toward the responses to a position of secondary significance; whereas this organization must be an important factor in accounting for differential responses to discrediting.

We can see this as an implicit feature of the Goffmanism perspective. For example, in referring to the care and attention taken to conceal one's genitals from public viewing he notes: "And it is suggested here that these parts of the body when exposed are not a symbol of sexuality merely, but of a laxity of control over the self--evidence of an insufficient harnessing of the self for the gathering."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the proffered self is supported through a corresponding organization of bodily appearance and performance. The failure to shield an erection bulge signifies insufficient body management--a loss of self-control. In the following passage which provides a reminiscence of adolescent experiences we find evidence of such insufficiency:

How nervous he would feel, wanting to ask a girl to dance but afraid she would say no; and if this did happen, he would try to act sophisticated as if he just didn't care. And then there was that physical feeling when he was dancing close. This would stimulate him, but he felt embarrassed, afraid that the girl would feel the bulge in his pants.<sup>8</sup>

There are some important observations we should posit with respect to this embarrassment episode. Presumably, the embarrassment is in some way associated with his expectations regarding how the girl must be formulating an impression of his proffered self--having presented her with tangible evidence of his sexual feelings. The self-image being presented is one of a dancing partner. This self-image demands a corresponding organization of the body--a certain locomotor competency and management of body parts. The erotic feelings and erection would constitute the body management features of a sexual partner self-image. There is a lack of correspondence between the dancing partner self and sexual partner body management features.

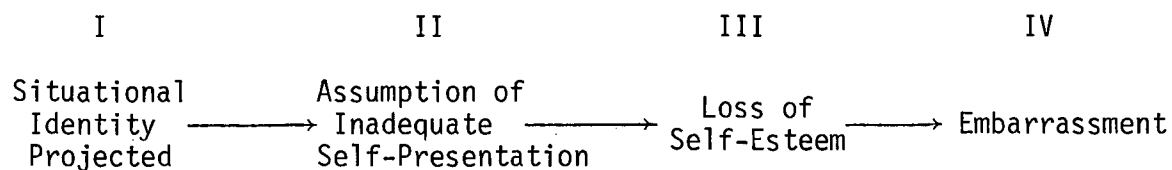
Previously, we entertained the assumption that self-control involves exercising control over the body; moreover the failure to manage the body can eventuate in embarrassment. We could further postulate that this experience can involve an awareness of a lack of harmony between a salient self-image and a corresponding organization of the body as suggested by the previously examined embarrassment episode. For purposes of analysis we could define this awareness of a lack of harmony between body and self as the experience of *body-self inauthenticity*.

In order to further explore this concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment phenomena we will turn to the research of Andre Modigliani.<sup>9</sup>

He argues that the capacity or likelihood of embarrassment is based on how an actor assumes others in his immediate presence perceive him. These assumptions arising from self-evaluation are contingent on the attributes of the actor which are made salient during the course of the interaction. These attributes constitute the situational identity--or the self that is being projected in the interaction.

Modigliani has proposed that embarrassment occurs when an actor experiences a loss of self-esteem with respect to his situational identity. The criteria for self-esteem is derived from the actor's evaluation of how adequate his self-presentation was in view of the responses of others. If the evaluation was non-favorable; then he loses self-esteem and embarrassment will be experienced. Diagrammatically, it would take the following sequential form:

#### MODIGLIANI EMBARRASSMENT MODEL



The critical step in the sequence of events that produce embarrassment is the actor's attitude toward audience reaction. The particular attitude taken by the actor will in part be a function of his personality traits. He proposes that the possession of the five following traits will increase the propensity to lose self-esteem:

- 1) empathic ability: this is defined in terms of how sensitive the

actor is with respect to the feelings of others. Evidently he assumes that the possession of this trait will increase awareness of negative evaluations by others;

- 2) low general-subjective-public esteem: actors who feel that others generally perceive them unfavorably. Those who possess this trait will obviously be more inclined to believe that others are responding negatively to their presentation;
- 3) low general-self-esteem: this is described as a feeling that one is generally inadequate;
- 4) unstable general-self-esteem: actors who are uncertain about their general adequacy;
- 5) high test anxiety: actors who are prone to anxiety when being evaluated by others.

These traits were measured in 183 male students and correlated with an Embarrassability Scale previously administered to the subjects. This produced the following intercorrelation matrix (Table I).

The social desirability scale was introduced to check a subject's tendency to distort his answers in a socially desirable manner. The matrix indicates that the strongest correlate of embarrassability is low general-subjective-public-esteem described in the table as feelings of inadequacy. It may be that persons possessing this trait are uncertain as to their competency in the management of body and consequently they more readily experience body-self inauthenticity. However, I would argue that the predicative utility of this correlation is extremely limited because the instrument--subjects were asked to rate themselves with

nineteen attributes such as intelligence, maturity and honesty by placing each attribute in a certain decile relative to other members of his college class--used by Modigliani to measure this trait fails to control for variations in response with respect to reference group identification. That is to say, a subject's level of general-subjective-public esteem could vary considerably when he is asked to rate himself relative to different racial groups, sex, religions or social classes.

TABLE I  
PERSONALITY AND EMBARRASSABILITY SCALES  
INTERCORRELATED (N=183)

	Embarrassability	Empathy	Feelings of inadeq	Gen-Self Esteem	Instab of Gen-Self Esteem	Test Anxiety
Empathy	.18					
Feelings of Inadequacy	.50	.01				
General-Self-Esteem	.25	-.03	.33			
Instab of Gen-Self Esteem	.05	-.02	.07	.30		
Test Anxiety	.33	-.03	.42	.15	-.03	
Need for Social Desirability	-.19	.02	-.25	-.43	-.10	-.19

Correlations larger than .14 are significant at the .05 level;

Correlations larger than .18 are significant at the .01 level.

The empathy trait does not correlate with any of the other traits which indicates a possibility that it could be responsible for a small

independent portion of the variance in embarrassability; and for this reason it should not be discounted because of a negligible correlation with embarrassability. One factor that could account for the weakness of the empathy correlate is the sample itself; we could question the wisdom of restricting the sample to college males--especially in view of Bennett and Cohen's findings that females in general score significantly higher in social empathy than males.<sup>10</sup> Modigliani argues that the negligible correlation of the empathy trait derives from an initial faulty premise; namely, an actor displaying this trait will be more sensitive to the negative evaluations of others. In this premise there is the tacit assumption that others have in fact negatively evaluated the actor experiencing embarrassment.

It is a taken-for-granted assumption that actors who regard negative evaluations as unfavorable have previously evaluated themselves positively and as a consequence they lose self-esteem. In other words, the actors have evaluated their performance as competent; but the audience reactions have influenced them to reevaluate their performances as inadequate. However, in experimentation devised to test how the evaluations of others influenced self-evaluations, Deutsch and Solomon<sup>11</sup> discovered that subjects who considered their performances to be inadequate judged themselves more favorably when they received negative evaluations than they did when receiving positive evaluations. They postulate that the critical factor determining the influence of others on self-evaluation is the degree of consistency between other's evaluations and self-evaluations.



This raises an important point: that is, actors have *their own standards of performance in social encounters; and these standards provide a frame of reference in which an actor organizes his interpretative responses to other's evaluations*. Possibly, it is the self-appraised failure to meet or conform to these standards that precipitates body concern resulting in experiences of body-self inauthenticity. Feelings of inadequacy would accentuate the tendency to evaluate performances negatively predisposing persons to these experiences.

The meaning we should confer on "other's evaluations" is particularly important when considering what explanatory value we could ascribe to the significant correlation between test anxiety and embarrassability. This trait is comparable to what is generally described as stage fright or "a consciousness of one's own limitations, at a moment when limitations of any sort place a barrier between what one wants to do and what one can do."<sup>12</sup> It was postulated that actors who exhibit high test anxiety are more sensitive to negative audience evaluations; and consequently, they are more susceptible to embarrassment. But, the relationship between test anxiety and embarrassment cannot be fully understood without considering the two following contingencies:

- 1) the importance of the variables being assessed by the audience;
- 2) the nature of the relationship between the audience and the actor.

For example, a doctoral candidate with high test anxiety ostensibly, would be more sensitive to other's evaluations during an oral

examination than in a seminar reading a paper to a group of students.

Argyle and Williams,<sup>13</sup> have proposed a method for examining these two contingencies; it measures the extent to which an actor feels he is being observed, as opposed to being the observer. The purpose of the observer-observed measurement is to provide some indication of the possible variables that are operating when an actor feels he is object of another's perception.

They discovered that people feel more observed when being interviewed than when interviewing; and when talking to an older person as compared with talking to a younger person. Females feel more observed when meeting someone of the same age, but of the opposite sex; whereas males feel more observed when meeting someone of the same age and sex. In their conclusions they advance the hypothesis that feeling observed does not derive from a realistic perception of the situation; but rather it is the result of a cognitive set or attitude about the nature of the relationship. Moreover, some actors will usually adopt the observed set as opposed to the observer set.

We shall explore the implications of the observer-observed attitudes for the concern-for-body dimension in the research of Jerome Sattler.<sup>14</sup> He suggests that actors who experience themselves as object's of other's perception--those who have adopted an observed attitude--feel judged; and embarrassment is predicated on the assumption that one has received a negative judgment. Here we find that the difficulty is one of taking-for-granted that the actor experiencing the negative judgment is prepared to acknowledge some form of inadequacy in his performance.

Otherwise, the action of others that warranted the status of negative judgment would be dismissed or considered to be of no concern. Moreover, if the person regarded that aspect of the self being evaluated as insignificant or of little value; it is likely that the negative evaluations would not be viewed disparagingly. Also it is not likely that concern would be expressed if the person believed the power or authority of the evaluators to be of little consequence.

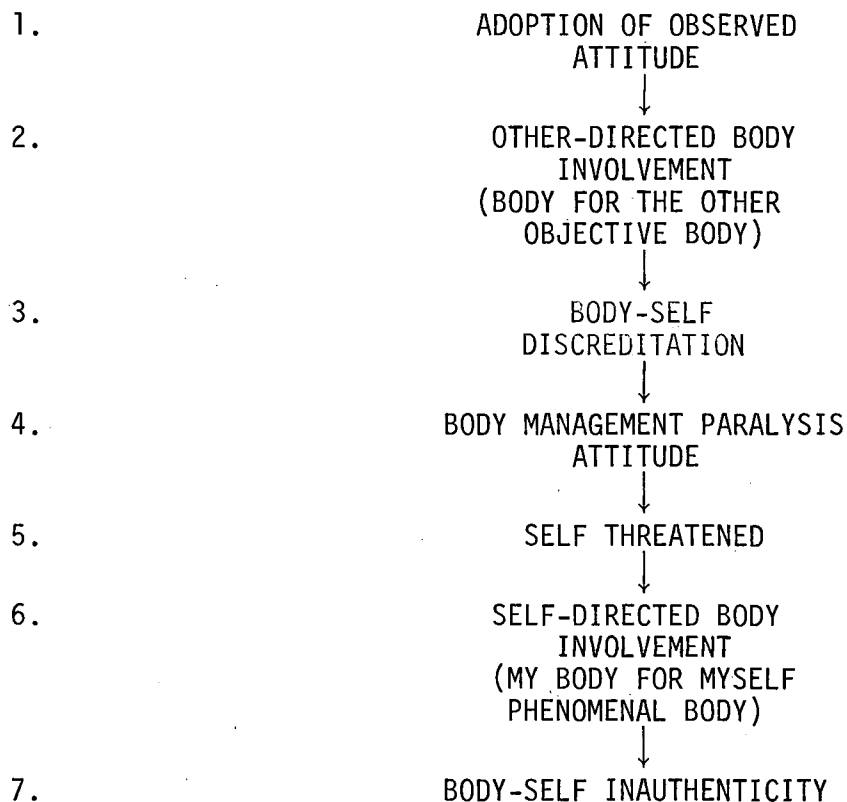
These are important criticisms in that they suggest an interesting distinction: there possibly may be a feeling that one is being looked at which is different from the feeling that one is being observed. To be looked at does not involve a concern about the lookers evaluation of your body action and appearance. On the other hand, to be observed does involve concern about the observers' judgments. An observer is someone who can exert a major influence on one's attitudes toward one's body action and appearance. Thus, the feeling that one is being observed fosters what we shall describe as other-directed body involvement. One experiences the self as a body-for-others: one is aware of the body as an object for others' scrutiny. Under the influence of the observer a negative judgment could possibly signal the attitude that one has temporarily lost the ability to manage body presentation. We could define this attitude as *temporary body management paralysis*. It would correspond with the feeling state Sattler<sup>15</sup> designates as behavioural immobilization: this is the feeling that one has no way acting that will be acceptable or appropriate to the situation. In terms of the concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment, management paralysis

would involve the loss of ability to exercise control over the organization of the body. You find that the body movements and appearance of the embarrassed person often are described as being strained, awkward, ungraceful and clumsy--all of which suggest such a loss. The experience of this loss could be felt as *threatening to the self* in the sense that one can no longer act when action is demanded. Consequently, the focus of awareness would shift from *other-directed body involvement* to *self-directed body involvement*. One is not concerned with how the body appears for others but rather with the subjectivity of the body. Merleau-Ponty<sup>16</sup> would distinguish this concern in terms of the body for the other (i.e., the objective body) and my body for myself (i.e., the phenomenal body). Self-directed body involvement resulting in the my body for myself concern could focus awareness on the salient self-image and its corresponding body organization. An awareness of a lack of correspondence culminates in the experience of *body-self-inauthenticity*. We could illustrate the progressive sequences culminating in this experience with the following paradigm.

Seven interrelated sequences will constitute the paradigm. Each sequence can be taken as an analytical feature of the concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment phenomena. A rationale for the ordering of these features will be offered in the next chapter when I propose a methodology suitable to the epistemological assumptions employed in the formulation of the paradigm.

# THE CONCERN-FOR-BODY DIMENSION OF EMBARRASSMENT PARADIGM

## SEQUENCES



Let us now direct our attention to how we might elaborate on the dynamics of this paradigm through a consideration of the recurrent features of embarrassment situations. Goffman has indicated that the factors precipitating embarrassment are not always located in the actions of actors; but rather they are to be found in the nature of the social system itself. He states: "In every social system, however, there are times and places where audience segregation regularly breaks down and where individuals confront one another with selves incompatible with ones they extend to each other on other occasions."<sup>17</sup> In other words,

the probability of embarrassment occurring would be greater in a context *where the proffered self of one actor cannot be sustained in harmony with another*. This would imply that the body management features of the proffered self are contextually variable. Thus a particular self-image may have one type of body organization in context (a) and a completely different organization in context (c). In other contexts the type of organization may be viewed as problematical. We could illustrate this with a hypothetical situation:

$$\longrightarrow \begin{matrix} & I \\ \begin{pmatrix} (a) & (b) & (c) \\ x & xy & y \end{pmatrix} & \uparrow \end{matrix}$$

In the above diagram I represents the social situation; the letters a, b, c refer to contexts in I; and x, y are the individuals that comprise I. The symbol  $\longrightarrow$  will denote direction of deference; for example,  $x \longrightarrow y$ , signifies x is deferring to y. The symbol  $\uparrow$  indicates disharmony and potential embarrassment. In context (a) y is obliged to defer to x by the regulations governing I. We would indicate this as:

$$(x \longleftarrow y)^a$$

In context (c) x is obliged to defer to y by the regulations governing I.

$$(x \longrightarrow y)^c$$

In context (b) there are no obligations pertaining to the display of deference. Subsequently, there is a possibility of embarrassment arising in the following situations:

$$(1) \quad \left[ \begin{array}{cc} (x \xrightarrow{\quad} y)^c & (x \xleftarrow{\quad} y)^a \\ x & y \end{array} \right]^b$$

In this situation x is projecting the self he would display in context (c); it would require context (c) body management features. However these features are organized according to the assumption by x that he should defer to y. This may include such things as lowering the head and refusing to speak until spoken to. But we have a situation in which y has presented body management features indicative of deference to x. Perhaps these are the same features x has organized in accordance with his proffered self. Obviously, they would be confronted with difficulties in attempting to integrate their respective social performances. If either individual adopts the body management paralysis attitude; then body-self inauthenticity can be experienced in this context.

$$(2) \quad \left[ \begin{array}{cc} (x \xleftarrow{\quad} y)^a & (x \xrightarrow{\quad} y)^c \\ x & y \end{array} \right]^b$$

Here, we find x projecting the self and corresponding body management features of context (a); whereas y has organized his body features in accordance with organizational principles governing context (c). Both their respective features reflect the expectation that the

other will display deference. That is to say, one of the basic organizing principles of body management features is that when features are corresponded with a self-image one expects that they will be supported with the features of another's self-image. Thus if individual x conveys features that indicate he expects deference from y; then y must provide features indicating support for the organizing principles of x. In the second situation such support is not provided for either individual. Either x or y may view this as an erroneous interpretation of what organization was needed to gain support for their body presentation. This can be observed when an actor extends his arm to shake the hand of another who either refuses the handshake or turns away: the actor is left with his hand in the air with no indication of support from the other person--in this case the support would be quite literal.

We will define the properties of a situation that support body management features as *contextual support elements*. They may involve properties<sup>18</sup> such as space, props, equipment, clothing as well as body management features. They support the actor's claims to competency in the establishment and maintenance of a self-image. Moreover, the actor's management of contextual support elements contributes to the defining of a self-image. Hence they assume an important role in the decisional processes underlying the body-self inauthenticity experiences. In order to examine their role let us consider how their mismanagement is related to embarrassment phenomena.



## Contextual Support Elements in the Concern-for-Body Paradigm

### Spaces

These are bounded areas within which social transactions take place. They can be explicitly marked off by barriers to some form of perception, in which case they would have the characteristics of Goffman's regions<sup>19</sup>--that is any place bounded to some degree by perceptual obstacles. According to Gross and Stone<sup>20</sup> embarrassment will frequently occur when an individual discovers that his or her intimate affairs have been communicated to someone on the other side of a wall. I have had this verified in personal discussions with persons about their embarrassing experiences. One couple talked to, stated they refrain from sexual intercourse if they suspect their children can hear them--fearing the embarrassment of having their children know they are engaged in this activity. This suggests that the sexual partner self-image for this couple cannot be maintained in spaces that would permit their children audible access to the activity consonant with the sexual partner self-image. Thus they have to organize their sexual partner body management features with this spatial consideration in mind.

In almost every society there are spaces reserved solely for the presence of one sex. A notable example would be segregated public washrooms. Even in societies where elimination functions are not restricted to certain spaces you will find constructions such as "long houses" which remain the exclusive space of men and "menstrual huts" that only women can enter.

A number of the people I talked to related instances of feeling extremely embarrassed at having inadvertently entered the wrong washroom --even if there was no member of the opposite sex present. We could describe this action as spatial invasions; that is, entering spaces prohibited to one's person. Usually when this occurs there are no contextual support elements to maintain one's self-image; one's self-image is incompatible with the situation.

Spatial boundaries are not always explicitly defined. Gross and Stone suggest that groups can develop "a common mood which is bounded by a certain space that defines the limits of their engagement."<sup>21</sup> Consequently, a new member will frequently experience embarrassment if he assumes that his entering into the group has disrupted the prevailing mood.

Spaces are usually not restricted to single activities. The activities or types of social transactions that occur within them can vary considerably in accordance with certain intervals of time. Hence, a space could be defined by the time limits prescribed for certain types of social transactions. At time interval (x) a space regularly may be used as an eating place; this same space at time interval (y) becomes a place for conducting business affairs; and at time interval (z) it serves as a place for entertaining friends. For example, in our society it can be quite embarrassing for guests if they suspect they have disrupted the time boundaries of their host by arriving too early for dinner. If guests arrive before the host has prepared his space so that it provides support for the guest self-image; their arrival may have the

status of spatial invasion conferred upon it. Consequently, the guests would find it difficult to organize body management features corresponding with their guest self-image.

### Props

These are the objects that are contained within the spaces but ordinarily are not manipulated or handled during social transactions. Sometimes they function as spatial demarcations dividing large groups into smaller and more intimate groups. Their major purpose is to provide support for the activities taking place in the spaces they are contained in. An excellent example of this is found in Ball's study of an abortion clinic.<sup>22</sup> He illustrates how an abortion clinic attempts to establish a rhetoric of legitimization through a specific arrangement of medical props. This arrangement stresses the medical legitimacy of the activities taking place in the abortion clinic space. The props facilitate the establishment and definition of a patient self-image for persons requiring abortion service.

The improper use of props can frequently give rise to embarrassment. A person may slip, trip over, collide or in some way disarrange props during the course of a social transaction. Thus the mismanagement of props challenges one's claim to the self-image and its corresponding body management features on which the self-image is supported. It challenges it in the sense that a specific organization of props contributes to the definition of the activities that are to occur in the spaces. Actors acknowledge the definition by using props in a way that

supports spatial activities predefined through prop organization.

### Equipment

These are the words and physical objects that are manipulated during social encounters. Interactional competency is generally expressed in terms of the ability to manipulate equipment. For example, in the passage to follow we find the person expressing embarrassment when equipment is inadequately manipulated:

I would like your advice on something which worries me very much and that is making conversation. I am very embarrassed sometimes when left alone with anyone whom I don't know very well because I am at loss for something to say, perhaps I say a sentence then follows an awkward silence.<sup>23</sup>

Here we find a person expressing concern about feeling embarrassed when experiencing what we colloquially refer to as being tongue-tied. She is unable to manipulate words that would support her self-image. Indeed the phrase being tongue-tied suggests body management paralysis.

Sometimes actors will indicate embarrassment when unintentionally introducing equipment that either refutes or questions the legitimacy of the activities occurring in a space. For instance, a sailor who has just arrived home after a long period at sea may absentmindedly ask his mother "to pass the fucking butter" during dinner or a person may bring erotic art prints to a nudist camp.<sup>24</sup> Just as props assist one to define spatial activities so does equipment; they both must be taken into consideration in the organization of body presentation. The way equipment is managed may influence actor's attitudes toward their self-image.

A graphic example is provided in the following description by a prostitute of one particular episode with a client:

Then he put marmalade on my breast and stuffed iced cherries up my cunt and licked the whole lot off. It was embarrassing.<sup>25</sup>

The client's management and manipulation of the cherries and marmalade supposedly deviates from the prostitute's expectations of how her body is to be treated in her profession. Her self-image of being a prostitute would be related to her perception of how her body is to be treated by a client. The client's equipment management does not lend support to this perception. Her awareness of her bodily appearance does not correspond with her prostitute self-image; nor, for that matter, does the body action of the client lend support to this particular self-image. Hence, the prostitute's awareness of this incongruity could lead to the interpretation of body-self inauthenticity.

### Clothing

A person who is inappropriately dressed for an occasion is usually embarrassed. John Messenger has pointed out a comical case of clothing mismanagement and embarrassment phenomena in Inis Beag, an Irish community. He writes:

Nudity is abhorred by the islanders . . . Several times my wife and I created intense embarrassment by entering a room in which a man had just finished his weekly ablutions and was barefooted; once when this occurred, the man hurriedly pulled on his stockings and said with obvious relief, "Sure, it's good to get your clothes on again."<sup>26</sup>

In addition the men of this community will refuse medical attention if they think it will involve baring their bodies to a nurse. The type and amount of body coverage is organized to assist the definitions of the relationships between actors. To reveal barefeet--as did the man from Inis Beag--is to offer others body management features consonant with a relational self-image. If one is not prepared to acknowledge the relational self-image, the display of its corresponding features may be interpreted as a lack of body control.

In our everyday affairs we organize body exposure through clothing in accordance with the type of spatial activities we are involved in. The quality referred to as respectability is typically treated by actors in terms of clothing management. A respectable girl does not flaunt her sexuality in public spaces through lack of body coverage or a respectable male does not manipulate the clothing of a female when others are observing. Actors attempt to effect the appearance of normality in body exposure through the management of objects that can provide coverage for the body. To express respectability through effecting an appearance of normality is to indicate "moral worth." For instance, witness the label we confer on persons whose body coverage is treated as insufficient; they are immodest; they lack moral substance. "Thus being respectable independently involves conceptions of and perceptions of the appearance of normality, leading to the accordance of moral worth, along with deferential displays of ratification, by other socially located actors. Therefore, we should note that if we know who is respectable or otherwise, we thereby know what is considered normal or otherwise."<sup>27</sup>

In the chapters to follow it will become increasingly apparent that the achievement of the appearance of normality is intimately associated with the actor's awareness of maintaining the appropriate type of control over contextual support elements and features of the body. For example, Martin Weinberg discovered through interviews that for many people the most embarrassing experience of their life involved being observed in some state of undress which they treated as a breakdown in sexual modesty.<sup>28</sup> However, he found that embarrassment does not normally occur in nudist camps. Nudity in this context is the normal appearance; whereas to be clothed invites suspicion of normality.

### Summary

We can appreciate the importance of contextual support elements in understanding how we come to invest our "human space with significance. They provide directives for the mobilization of the self and corresponding body management features. The management of contextual support elements facilitates the achievement of the appearance of normality. Their management provides us with a sense of confidence in the predictability and manageability of the perceived situation; in other words, it fosters a sense of security. This security relates to the feeling of exercising control over the situation. Their mismanagement can invalidate our claim to the acceptability of the mobilized self. Our corresponding body organization subsequently, does not lend support to the self. Temporarily, we question our ability to act which is based on this body organization. An inability to act leads to a

consideration of competency. This involves an assessment of the ability to maintain control of body management features in accordance with the situational exigencies. An unfavorable assessment can result in a judgment of incompetency which may be interpreted as body-self inauthenticity.

In the next chapter I will extend this treatment of the dynamics underlying the employment of the concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment paradigm by examining each of its sequences through what will be described as the umwelt method of analysis. Here we shall be considering the actor's interpretive procedures in giving meaning to the body when embarrassed and how observers may infer those meanings.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Erving Goffman, *Interactional Ritual* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1970), p. 378.

<sup>3</sup>A. Dean and L. Carra, *Fundamentals of Play Directing* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>Edward Gross and G. P. Stone, "Embarrassment and the Analysis of Role Requirements," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1964, 2.

<sup>5</sup>For an illuminating account of the role problems associated with Transsexualism see James P. Driscoll. "Transsexuals," *Transaction*, Vol. 8, No. 5 and 6, April 1971.

<sup>6</sup>Goffman, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, *Behaviour in Public Places* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), p. 27.

<sup>8</sup>William A. Schonfeld, "Descriptions of Adolescence," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 31, 1971, 22.

<sup>9</sup>Andre Modigliani, "Embarrassment and Embarrassability," *Sociometry*, Vol. 31, 1968, 313-26.

<sup>10</sup>E. M. Bennett and L. R. Cohen, "Men and Woman: Personality Patterns and Contrasts," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 59, 1959, 101-55.

<sup>11</sup>M. Deutsch and L. Solomon, "Reactions to Evaluations by Others as Influenced by Self-Evaluations," *Sociometry*, Vol. 22, 1959, 93-111.

<sup>12</sup>Rose Heylbut, "How to Abolish Fear Before Audiences," *Etude*, Vol. 57, 1939, 12.

<sup>13</sup>Michael Argyle and Marilyn Williams, "Observer or Observed? A Reversible Perspective in Person Perception," *Sociometry*, Vol. 33, 1969, 396-412.

<sup>14</sup>J. A. Sattler, "A Theoretical, Developmental and Clinical Investigation of Embarrassment," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 1965, Vol. 71, 19-59.

<sup>15</sup>Sattler, *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>See Introduction footnote No. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Goffman, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>18</sup>Gross and Stone suggest some relationships between the occurrence of embarrassment and properties of situations such as space, props, clothing and equipment in their "Embarrassment and the Analysis of Role Requirements."

<sup>19</sup>For a discussion of the region concept see Erving Goffman's, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 106-40.

<sup>20</sup>Gross and Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Donald W. Ball, "An Abortion Clinic Ethnography," *Social Problems*, Vol. 14, 1966, 293-301.

<sup>23</sup>This was a letter of the "Dear Abby" type printed in a weekly periodical and found in James Hemming, *Problems of Adolescent Girls* (Toronto: Heinemann, 1960), p. 137.

<sup>24</sup>Erving Goffman alludes to a number of such instances as "pass the fucking butter" in his discussion dramaturgical basis of social performances in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-77.

<sup>25</sup>Embarrassment episode found in Jack Douglas, *Observations of Deviance* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 74.

<sup>26</sup>John C. Messenger, "Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community," in *Human Sexual Behaviour*, ed. D. S. Marshall and R. C. Suggs (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 332.

<sup>27</sup>Donald W. Ball, "The Problematics of Respectability," in *Deviance and Respectability The Social Construction of Moral Meanings*, ed. Jack Douglas (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 332-333.

<sup>28</sup>Martin S. Weinberg, "Embarrassment: Its Variable and Invariable Aspects," *Social Forces*, Vol. 46, 1967, 382-388.

## CHAPTER II

### A EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION OF THE BODY PARADIGM

One of the primary objectives of this study is to discover how various themes of body involvement are reflected in the actor's experience of embarrassment. It was stated that the occurrence of embarrassment has been treated in terms of an actor's loss of self-control which subsequently was shown to be equivalent to a loss of body control. Thus, the prominence of the body in the embarrassed actor's awareness can be treated as one of the experiential features of embarrassment phenomena. For purposes of analysis this particular experience of body prominence was proposed in the form of a concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment paradigm.

It is now necessary to undertake the demanding task of specifying:

- 1) *the sociological status of the concern-for body dimension of embarrassment paradigm; and*
- 2) *the principles underlying the implementation of this paradigm.*

In addressing these two issues I will endeavor to provide some guidelines for the major concern of this paper: namely, the theoretical possibilities of a "sociology of the body."

### Making the Body Paradigm Accountable

A discussion of the sociological status of the concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment paradigm (hereafter referred to as body paradigm) is reducible to the following problem: *How does the topic of the body paradigm become understandable as an observer's method which purportedly accounts for some feature of the social world?* Parenthetically, the crux of this problem is located in the significance assigned to the words "accounts for." These words can be translated as makes available a feature of the social world such that this feature is rendered contextually specifiable when observers employ methods determining its usage. Therefore, in explicating the ideas responsible for the production of the observer's methods, the body paradigm becomes understandable. Here, it should be apparent that there is an important distinction between what is involved in the actual employment of method and the ideas for making those methods employable in that the latter articulate the possibility of the former. The feature in question for which ideas must be given to make possible the observer's method of employing that feature is the orientation of the actor to his body during a period in which he experiences embarrassment. In other words, before the body paradigm can be employed as a method for dealing with the embarrassed actor's orientation toward his body, it is necessary to qualify how it is possible to speak of this body orientation topic.

Addressing the Epistemological Basis of  
the Body Paradigm

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To speak of an embarrassed actor's orientation toward his body is to give tacit recognition to the claim of being able to understand how the body appears to the actor experiencing embarrassment. Merleau-Ponty, in the commentary to follow succinctly articulates a possibility for elaborating on how this claim of being able to understand the actor's concern for body appearance may be attended to:

. . . my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. . . . I can therefore take my place, through the medium of my body as the potential source of a certain number of familiar actions, in my environment conceived as a set of manipulanda and without, moreover, envisaging my body or my surrounding as objects in the Kantian sense, that is, as systems of qualities linked by some intelligible law, as transparent entities, free from any attachment to a specific place or time, and ready to be named or at least pointed out.<sup>1</sup>

The significant feature in the above statement is the emphasis placed on the actor's cognizance of his body appearance as being disclosed during reflection on either his bodily involvement in some task or bodily potential for action. Both of these reflections would qualify as what Schütz chooses to describe as a "project-at-hand."<sup>2</sup> That is, any act of perception is influenced by what the perceiver is doing or intending to do in the situation in question; in other words, what his project is in the situation in which he is perceiving. To elucidate further on this point, the actor's body appears to him as a relationship between the experienced situation and an appraisal of how his body is located in the experienced situation. It is a relationship in which

the actor interprets his body as a way of acting or being acted upon. For example, when the actor shakes the hand of another his body appears to him as a specific organization of movements involving the hand, arm and shoulder, as well as an experience of bodily strength which is interpreted as either accomplishing or not accomplishing the "project-at-hand." Accordingly, it would be correct to describe the actor's interpretation of accomplishment as a consciousness of bodily performance in the face of some "project-at-hand." *It is this consciousness that provides the actor with an image of his body-self.*

However, the problem that remains to be resolved is the analytic status to be conferred on the observer's understanding of this consciousness. The actor arrives at this consciousness of bodily performance through what Blum and McHugh acknowledge as "doing motives." That is, "When practical actors are 'doing motives,' they are engaged in formulating themselves and their environments, in constructing and treating with their common sense courses of action."<sup>3</sup> There is a similarity between actor's consciousness of bodily performance which is "in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but 'I can' and the actor's 'doing motives.'" Both topics presuppose a fundamental intentionality; namely, the realization of some project. *The appearance of the body is an actuality that emerges for the actor in the performance of some "project-at-hand" which is made possible through the actor's "doing motives."* This close relationship between actor's "doing motives" and actor's having a consciousness of bodily performance makes it possible to treat the observer's understanding of actor's "doing motives" in a

way that is similar to the observer's understanding of the actor's consciousness of bodily performance.

Blum and McHugh provide some excellent insight into how such treatment may be prescribed. They write:

Motives acquire their analytic status as observers' rules. They are not forces or events in the world extraneous to an observer. Motives are sociologically possible only because some practical observer has methods and procedures--i.e., rules--for locating them as events in the world, not because that is where they really are. Because events cannot "exist" sociologically except as courses of treatment, and because courses of treatment are not intelligible except through available social rule, motives cannot be located except by rule. Consequently, motives are accomplished exclusively through the use of such methods and procedures.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore,

. . . when we speak of motive, we have in mind neither the technical observer's notion of the causes of an action, nor the actor's report of why an action was done. We do not require either an explanation or reason for the action, but rather some description of the socially organized conditions which produce the practical and ordinary use of motive in the mundane affairs of societal members. To locate motive is thus not to "find" anything but to describe the necessary and analytically prior understandings and conventions which must be employed in order for a member even to invoke motive as a method for making a social environment orderly and sensible.<sup>6</sup>

Here, motives are treated as observer's rules for identifying methods employed by the actor "doing motives." The body paradigm seeks to represent the methodical procedures engaged by the actor who is attending to his body during a period in which he experiences embarrassment. This attending to the body is the actor's consciousness of bodily performance. Moreover, this consciousness is dependent upon some "project-at-hand" that arises in the actor's "doing motives." To locate

motive usage is to stipulate the conditions that merited its employment. The rationale here is that "doing motives" is an actor's activity. In order to reproduce that activity so that it becomes understandable as an actor's production and not an observer's conception of an actor's production, it would be necessary to construct methods that explicate the understanding the actor requires to do the activity. This rationale would apply with equal justification to the method of locating the actor's body paradigm usage. *That is to say, to locate the methodical procedures represented in the body paradigm is to make accountable the actor's understanding of the situation that was responsible for the formulation of the procedures.*

#### The Actor's Formulation of Body Paradigm Procedures

A discussion of the actor's understanding of a situation that results in his employment of body paradigm procedures involves some conception of how the actor perceives his body in relation to a situation as he defines it. I would posit this as one of the basic problems of a "sociology of the body." *In other words, a "sociology of the body" would address itself to a descriptive analysis and interpretative explication of the actor's experience of his body as apprehended in acting or being acted upon when his awareness is directed toward some feature of his phenomenal world.*

Calvin Schrag presents a useful distinction that may provide some clarification of this point.<sup>7</sup> He notes a distinction between the



body as "concretely lived" and the body as "objectively known." The former signifies a mode of orientation experientially disclosed as bodily movements directed toward some practical concern. Schrag speaks of the primordial experience of the "lived body" as ". . . one of engagement in a world of concrete projects--projects which receive their significance through my body as the locus of concern."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the experience of the lived body is indistinguishable from the experience of "selfness." Thus the "lived body" becomes the self of the actor. The body as a composite of nerve pathways, endocrinal discharges and muscular fibres is the body as objectively known. To treat the body as objectively known is to represent the body as a conceptualized entity rather than as a mode or orientation. A "sociology of the body"--as I would define it--would not address itself to an understanding of the body as objectively known, but rather to a theoretical and empirical account of the "lived body."

One type of methodological approach to this conception of the actor's experience of his body as "concretely lived" is suggested in the explanatory models of ethologists and primatologists.<sup>9</sup> These are models that attempt to make describable features of the animal's world in terms of the animal's experience of those features. For example, Jane Van Lawick-Goodall in a primatological study of Gombe Stream chimpanzees remarks that the chimpanzee has a repertoire of postures that elicit submissive behaviour in the individual they are directed toward.<sup>10</sup> Basically, this could be translated as certain physical displays constitute features of the chimpanzee phenomenal world. Moreover, these

features have particular meanings to the chimpanzee. When a chimpanzee recognizes a specific configuration of bodily movement in another, he attributes a signification to his experience of the situation. This signification provides direction in ordering the type of action or more precisely the bodily movement that he will display.

This translation represents what Von Uexküll might describe as an "umwelt" interpretation.<sup>11</sup> To illustrate what is encompassed in the "umwelt" construct I will refer to a hypothetical problem posed by Von Uexküll. He describes a situation in which three people--a hunter, a lumber merchant and a young girl--observe an oak tree. The hunter observes the oak as a shelter for game and a cover for himself; the lumber merchant sees the oak as a saleable object; the young girl sees the oak as a facet of a love landscape. How is it possible for the oak tree to be observed as three different things? In each case the person attributes a particular significance to the oak. This signification presents itself as a possibility for action. Hence, for the hunter the oak presents itself as a possibility for taking cover or for possibly finding game hidden in its branches. The important point here is that when an account is given of some feature of an actor's phenomenal world it must make understandable the signification of that feature for the actor. Such accounts would represent "umwelt" interpretations. These interpretations constitute an integral part of ethological and primatological explanatory models.

The principle value of the umwelt method of analysis for this study is that it suggests a way of constructing an interpretative account

for making describable features of the actor's phenomenal world that are responsible for the actor's employment of body paradigm procedures. I now will elucidate this interpretative account in a discussion of the sequences of the body paradigm as displayed on page 22. To facilitate this discussion I will include references to embarrassment episodes found in literature of all genre.

### A Discussion of the Sequences that Comprise the Body Paradigm

#### First Sequence (Adoption of Observed Attitude)

A psychoanalyst in describing a patient's dream transcribes the following passage:

Two weeks later she dreamed that she was in bed with the man to whom she was married. While she is holding this man's penis, her father passes by. In the dream Joan is very embarrassed and immediately lets go of the penis. She has the distinct feeling that her father has seen what went on.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of this particular episode is to illustrate some of the features responsible for the actor's adoption of the observed attitude --the first sequence in the body paradigm. Purportedly, the embarrassment experienced by the woman is related to her viewing of her body and its action as being accessible visually to her father when such accessibility was not solicited and consequently not expected. The gaze of her father and her feeling that she was the recipient of the gaze are features of the woman's phenomenal world. Furthermore, these features signify an unanticipated encounter for the woman. This is

indicated in her termination of the activity in which she was engaged. The woman was not able to incorporate the feeling that she was the recipient of her father's gaze into the activity with the man. In addition, an intrinsic feature of the unanticipated encounter is what actors in everyday life usual refer to as a surprise. It is not a pleasant surprise but rather a sudden realization of being exposed to the gaze of a "significant other". It is this realization that results in the actor's adoption of the observed attitude. The woman in adopting the observed attitude has become aware of her body as an object of her father's awareness. In other words, her awareness of her body is constituted by her awareness of her father's awareness of her body. This type of bodily awareness precipitates other-directed body involvement (the second sequence in the body paradigm).

#### Second Sequence (Other-Directed Body Involvement)

To be aware of the body as a significant other's awareness of the body is to view the body as an object for the significant other. The concern for the body as an object for a significant other represents other-directed body involvement. Van Den Berg, succinctly conveys this concern in a description of a girl entering a room occupied by her brother and his friends. He writes:

The girl perceives that she is regarded with this look; her brother's friends regard her with this unmasking look, they look through her clothes, their eyes divine from the neck the breast, from the ankle the thigh, their eyes try to unclothe her. Her body is taken from her, it has turned object to the friends of her brother.<sup>14</sup>

Here, the body of the girl becomes for her a feature of her phenomenal world. The adoption of the observed attitude procedure, involved the actor's recognition of being accessible in an unanticipated encounter and consequently feeling exposed to the critical observation of a significant other. This feeling of exposure is realized as an awareness of the body as an object for others, which in turn gives rise to other-directed body involvement. In effect, the actor's awareness of the objectification of his body involves a recognition of his body as an object attended to by the significant other. This attending by the other confers on the body of the actor the status of a thing to be manipulated or handled by the other in the realization of some project-at-hand. For the girl in Van Den Berg's description it is apparent that her body has become for her a thing which is being sexually manipulated by her brother's friends.

To understand what significance she would attribute to her body as a thing for other's actions I refer to Natanson's explanation of the meaning of treating a person as an object:

"Object" may be understood as that which has no unity of its own (so far as it is initially grasped by a subject) but which functions within the status provided by the subject. Subjects are dominant; objects are dependent.<sup>15</sup>

The point in this explanation that should be stressed is that to be an "object" is to be dependent upon other's evaluations for defining what you are, and concomitantly how you are to act. In view of this point, I will assume that the significance the girl attributes to her body as a thing is dependent upon how she perceives the status conferred on

her body by the other's evaluations. This perception would involve her taking into account bodily features of the others such as eye movements, eyelid activity, eyebrow motions, position of the mouth, bodily postures, physical proximity, head, hand and arm movements, ambulatory activity and various visible autonomic responses. These features would be represented in the girl's phenomenal world as the other's organization of the body for the realization of the conferring-a-status on-her-body-project. If the girl feels she cannot accept nor organize her body for the types of action demanded of the conferred status, then body-self discreditation would be experienced.

### Third Sequence (Body-self Discreditation)

To discuss the actor's body-self discreditation procedure I will refer to a case study of a 61-year-old woman who has had facial carcinoma necessitating the amputation of the distal part of her nose. The following passage is a description of the woman's everyday encounters with others:

In a store a saleswoman asked, "Who punched your nose?" On a bus high school girls looked at her and began giggling. She overheard two women say, "Why does she go out in public with a patch like that? I'd stay home if I looked like that." Such experiences Mrs. Dover said, made her "grow cold inside," and the mere thought of being among strangers caused her to "break out in a cold sweat." On the subway she said she was afraid to look up and see people staring at her or nudging each other... Mrs. Dover's daughter reported that her mother became a "nervous wreck" if a stranger came into the house: "She goes into a shell and acts ashamed and embarrassed."<sup>16</sup>

A body-self is a potential for bodily action which makes possible

the realization of a particular project. Any features of the body which are perceptually accessible to others can be described as belonging-to-me-features-of-the-body. In the case study of the woman who had facial carcinoma, the surgical disfigurement is for her an unacceptable belonging-to-me-feature-of-her-body. Belonging-to-me-features-of-the-body are in part responsible for converting the potentials for bodily action inherent in a body-self into the actual bodily action.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the actor's belonging-to-me-features-of-the body are features of the phenomenal world of those others who confer a status on the actor's body. The conferred status is the signification of the actor's belonging-to-me-features-of-the body for others. It was previously stated that significations represent for the actor possibilities for action. Thus, the actor interprets a conferred status as a way of being acted upon when exercising the concern of other-directed body involvement. The surgically disfigured woman does not accept the way she is acted upon by others. Nevertheless, she is dependent upon the others for interpreting what she is and how she is to act in the situation. That is to say, she is dependent upon the others for assembling a "project-at-hand." The woman's image of her body-self is an awareness of accomplishing this project which initially requires her acceptance of the way others are acting toward her. However, her obvious rejection of the way she is attended to by others precludes the possibility of accomplishing this project. An awareness of not accomplishing some project-at-hand is experienced by an actor as body-self discreditation. The actor's image of his discredited body-self is recognized by him as body management paralysis.

#### Fourth Sequence (Body Management Paralysis)

Body management paralysis is the behavioral immobilization which Sattler describes as the "essense of embarrassment."<sup>18</sup> That is, the feeling of being at an impasse or more precisely a realization of being uncertain of what action is appropriate. This uncertainty is a product of the actor's rejection of a conferred status. In rejecting the conferred status the actor is confronted with a situation in which he must formulate possibilities for action that differ from those expressed in the conferred status. Uncertainty is experienced by the actor when these formulations are not forthcoming or when the actor is critical of the actions they suggest. Lacking possibilities for action or doubting the feasibility of some possible course of action would present the actor with problems pertaining to the organization of body management features. The organization of these features requires of the actor both an understanding of and commitment to the formulations that are to be realized in the presentation of the bodily action. Otherwise, the actor would not be able to assess whether or not he was accomplishing or not accomplishing the presentation through a particular organization of body management features.

The actor would experience confusion when assessments of bodily performance become problematical as a result of the previously discussed uncertainty. This confusion is reflected in the strained, clumsy, awkward and generally ungraceful organization of bodily movements frequently displayed when embarrassment is experienced. Actors in their



everyday encounters usually treat this state of confusion as a loss of poise or self-control.

Generally speaking, in our society the loss of self-control (which in fact indicates a loss of body control) has extremely negative social value; in other words, it is strongly disapproved. Of course, there are exceptions as in the case of death notifications<sup>19</sup> when a loss of self-control is not only accepted but it is expected of the person. However, such exceptions to the rule are usually not associated with episodes of embarrassment. On the contrary, to be aware of a loss of self-control when feeling embarrassed is to feel threatened by the disapproval that such a loss entails. This feeling of being threatened represents the fifth sequence in the body paradigm.

#### Fifth Sequence (Self Threatened)

Body awareness would be a prominent feature of the actor's phenomenal world when the threat procedure is employed. The procedure itself involves the actor's interpretation of a relationship between the perceived situation and the presence of his body in that situation. Moreover, this relationship should indicate to the actor that his position is insecure in the sense of not being in control of managing the situation when such control is necessary.

It could be argued that the actor's sense of security is closely related to how secure he feels about his body. This is reflected in language usage. For example, someone who is bothered or disturbed is said to be "up-tight"; persons exposed to stress situations are said to be in danger of "falling apart"; when we feel "cut-off" from others we feel

"empty". In fact, you find that danger in any form generally is linked to body destructive implications. A politician who is losing an election is in danger of being squashed by his opponent; and people who gamble in stocks risk the danger of taking a beating. Significantly, *an actor will attempt to avoid embarrassment in order to prevent a loss of face.*

To provide further support for this account of the fifth sequence I have compiled from Davitz's emotional check list and other sources that include some reference to embarrassment, a list of descriptions which presumably reflect the actor's experience of embarrassment:

#### EMBARRASSMENT EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTIONS

1. there is a sense of regret;
2. I begin to think what I can do to change the situation;
3. there is a yearning, a desire for change; I want things to hurry up and begin to change;
4. I want to hide my feeling;
5. I keep blaming myself for the situation;
6. I get mad at myself for my feelings or thoughts or for what I've done;
7. I try to stop thinking of the situation and try to think of other things;
8. I want to withdraw disappear, draw back, be alone, away from others, crawl into myself;
9. there is an impulse to hide, to escape, to run, to get away;
10. my body wants to contract, draw closer to myself;

11. there is a sense of aloneness, being cut off completely by myself;
12. I feel vulnerable and totally helpless;
13. there is a sense that I have no control over the situation;
14. a sense of being gripped by the situation;
15. my blood pressure goes up; blood seems to rush through my body;
16. my pulse quickens;
17. there is a quickening of heartbeat;
18. I want to do something, anything to change the situation and relieve the tension;
19. my whole body is tense;
20. there is a clutching, a sinking feeling in my stomach;
21. I keep thinking about what happened over and over again;
22. I'm hypersensitive;
23. I can only think of what caused the feeling;
24. I am very aware of myself in relation to others;
25. I'm chilled, cold all over;
26. I'm especially sensitive to everything around me;
27. the feeling is all involuntary, there is no anticipation on my part, it all just comes;
28. the feeling begins with a sharp sudden onset;
29. it is a very personal feeling;
30. I wish that the floor would open up and swallow me;
31. I experience myself as awkward and ungraceful;
32. I feel foolish and out of place;
33. It is an unpleasant sensation;

34. I feel everyone is looking at me;
35. I can feel my face getting red;
36. a constriction of the diaphragm;
37. a feeling of wobbliness;
38. a consciousness of strained and unnatural gestures;
39. dryness of the mouth;
40. tenseness of the muscles;
41. voluntary contraction of the external sphincter and muscle;
42. contraction of muscles of throat;
43. inflation of vestibule of lips;
44. lowering of the head and half covering eyes with hand.

The first and perhaps most significant observation that could be made of these descriptions is the obvious reference to tension, strain and vulnerability. Many of the embarrassment experiential descriptions (see descriptions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 26, 30, 32, 34) could be translated into terms which express a feeling of being unprotected and exposed. The impulse to hide, run and escape could be interpreted as a primitive flight reaction to a threatening stimuli. Expressions such as I want to withdraw, disappear, draw back, crawl into myself; my body wants to contract are indicative of a state of fear. Baldwin recognized in the symptoms of embarrassment and bashfulness the experience of vulnerability and exposure characteristic of fear.<sup>21</sup> He proposed that fear is displayed in embarrassment symptoms such as:

nervous fingerings of dress, objects, hands, etc., turning away of head and body, bowing of head and hiding of face, awkward movements of trunk and legs, and in extreme cases, reddening of the face, puckering of lips and eye muscles, and finally cries and weeping.<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that this interpretation has been harshly criticized by MacCurdy who writes:

The unhappy wretch who blushes, averts his eyes, hangs his head, covers his face with his hands and "wishes he might sink through the floor", is hardly the picture of fear. Moreover the mental confusion so common in embarrassment is more characteristic of the inertness of immobility than of the liveliness of flight. In fact the common phrase 'covered with confusion' contains both the elements of concealment and incapacity to respond... Those who have claimed that embarrassment is associated with danger have arrived at their conclusion from a study of all the component phenomena which they interpret as impulsive efforts to avoid the observation of hostile onlookers. Yet it is notorious that in our society the situations which excite shame do not involve any physical threat. This is a far cry from a primitive immobility reaction and it challenges explanation. The common occasions for our embarrassment are exposure of the parts of the body usually hidden the betrayal of sexual thoughts, lapses of etiquette and unusual conspicuousness of the subject.<sup>23</sup>

MacCurdy is correct in pointing out that the experience of embarrassment does not in most cases involve the concern of being bodily assaulted by hostile onlookers. However, what he fails to consider is that the experience of feeling threatened does not necessarily have to involve an anticipation of physical assault. In fact, in most everyday situations the actor's experience of threat arises as a result of being subjected to various types of deprivations. For example, an actor can feel threatened when confronted with the possibility of losing material possessions such as a car or home. Others may feel threatened when a religious organization to which they are affiliated is exposed as being fraudulent. In the case of embarrassment the threat arises from the fear of being deprived of recognition, acceptance and support from other actors. That is to say, the awkwardness and clumsiness displayed

by the embarrassed actor serves as an indication to others that the actor has lost poise or self-control.

In our society a loss of self-control has negative social value; it deprives the actor of positive self-evaluations. The importance of positive self-evaluations is dramatically conveyed by Becker:

In the social encounter each member exposes for public scrutiny and possible intolerable undermining, the one thing he needs most: the positive self-evaluation he has so laboriously fashioned. With stakes of this magnitude there can be nothing routine about social life. Each social encounter is a hallowed event.<sup>24</sup>

It should be noted that when I speak of the actor's loss of self-control I am not referring to MacCurdy's common occasions for embarrassment such as exposure of body parts or lapses of etiquette but rather to the confusion and incapacity to organize body management features in the presentation of bodily performance following those common occasions for embarrassment described by MacCurdy. Often, actors displaying the situational improprieties - that MacCurdy intimates as sources of embarrassment - will incorporate or adapt the improprieties to their bodily performances. For example, a professor may notice when lecturing to students that his pant-zipper is wide open. Consequently, he may reach down and casually adjust the pant-zipper without displaying any bodily action that the students would recognize as uneasiness, awkwardness or uncertainty. This bodily action by the professor would be invested with the quality of "coolness" by the students. That is to say, the quality of "coolness" when applied to the actor's perception of other bodies is a feature of the everyday world recognized in bodily action that

does not indicate uneasiness, awkwardness, or uncertainty when there was an expectation that some indication of uneasiness, awkwardness or uncertainty would be displayed. The failure to exhibit "coolness" usually eventuates in a loss of poise or self-control.

Now, to answer MacCurdy's criticism that the actor is not interpreting the relationship between the perceived situation and the presence of his body in that situation as threatening, I must present a rather detailed explanation of the bodily action generally considered symptomatic of embarrassment states. The symptoms most frequently cited in the literature are:

1. aversion of eye-contact;
2. lowering of the head;
3. blushing;
4. heavy perspiration;
5. crouching of the body;
6. frequent touching of the body;
7. rapid blinking;
8. bodily tremor.

All of these symptoms and the concomitant internal sensations (see embarrassment experience descriptions 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 27, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 on pages 52 and 53) are characteristic of high arousal states associated with the experiencing of threat. Such arousal states are normally physiologically identified

with:

- 1) an intense contraction of skeletal musculature; this could in part account for the tension experienced during embarrassment;
- 2) low palmer skin resistance;
- 3) high level of electrocortical activation.<sup>25</sup>

The most pronounced feature that actors recognize as indicative of someone experiencing embarrassment is gaze avoidance; that is, the failure to gaze fixate. There is wide variety of information from diverse scientific persuasions that would facilitate an understanding of the complex relationships between gaze avoidance, arousal, and feeling threatened.

Wada in a controlled experiment with macaque monkeys discovered that he could produce through mutual gazing a suppression of the monkey's evoked brain-stem potentials, which is an index of high cortical arousal.<sup>26</sup> In other words, in nonhuman primates mutual eye-contact is experienced as physiological arousal. Kendon's human primate visual behaviour research indicates also that mutual gazing is arousing; moreover, if eye-contact is maintained beyond certain time intervals, as related to contextual variables, it is experienced as threatening.<sup>27</sup> To maintain eye-contact beyond acceptable periods is to engage in what is commonly referred to as staring. Interestingly, Schaller in his study of the Highland gorilla reported that when he constantly stared at the gorillas they displayed uneasiness in their bodily action that conveyed the feeling of being threatened.<sup>28</sup>



Luborsky, Blinder and Mackworth found a significant relationship between high galvanic skin responsivity and the length of fixation on pictures that portrayed scenes of threatening actions.<sup>29</sup> The relationship indicated that the higher a subject's GSR peak, the shorter the length of his fixations. In other words, to view something as threatening increases arousal. Many chronically regressed schizophrenics display marked gaze avoidance and high levels of arousal. For example, Venables and King using the threshold of fusion of pairs of light flashes as an index of arousal, found that the more withdrawn the schizophrenically diagnosed patient, the higher his arousal.<sup>30</sup> The correlations between arousal and withdrawal for three separate studies were +0.85, +0.65 and +0.75. Gaze aversion is also characteristic feature in children who suffer from "early infantile autism." Electroencephalogram analysis indicates that the nonspecific activity of the reticular system is sustained at a chronically high level in these children.<sup>31</sup> That is, they are subject to an unusually high level of electrocortical activation. Hutt and Ownsted attribute the gaze aversion feature of autistic children to an innately determined need to reduce unusually high levels of arousal.<sup>32</sup> In fact, they entertain the assumption that "in these species in which the dominant receptor modality is vision, gaze aversion is a built-in biological component of high arousal" Hutt and Ownsted describe the gaze aversion of autistic children in terms of Chance's postulated visual "cut-off" acts. These are acts which reduce the reception of arousing stimuli.<sup>33</sup> To appreciate the relevance of these findings to the discussion of the

fifth sequence, it will be necessary to briefly refer to the actor's interpretative procedures that resulted in the employment of the fourth sequence in the body paradigm.

A body-self is disclosed to the actor during involvement in some task or anticipated project. It is an awareness of body management features acting upon something, as well as belonging-to-me-features-of-the-body being acted upon. The body management features and the accessibility of belonging-to-me-features-of-the-body are organized in accordance with the actor's understanding of what bodily action is required to achieve a particular project. This understanding provides the actor with an awareness of being in control rather than being controlled by the perceived situation. Furthermore, a sense of security in physical and social environmental transactions emerges from the awareness of being in control of the perceived situation. For example, a woman who believes certain belonging-to-me-features-of-the body are attractive to others may formulate projects that make these features readily available. She may have complete confidence in her ability to perform these projects which involve skilled motor co-ordination; she may be completely relaxed in interpersonal relationships involving the performance of the projects. Thus, it would be correct to speak of her inner assuredness of anticipated recognition as being born of a supreme confidence in the predictability and manageability of her phenomenal world when she is displaying bodily action associated with particular projects.

During body management paralysis there is confusion with respect

to what bodily action should be displayed and the organization of body management features that would make such action possible. This confusion would deprive the actor of confidence in the predictability and manageability of the body during this period. However, this confidence is necessary for the emergence of the awareness of exercising control over the perceived situation; without it the actor would experience his body as being vulnerable in the sense of not being able to control how it is acted upon. Such vulnerability would be responsible for the actor's interpretation of the threatening relationship between his body and the perceived situation. The actor views his bodily presence as being unprotected and exposed to features in his phenomenal world over which he has no control. This is evident in the following embarrassment episode:

When I undress to change for netball, my friends who are not as developed as me, laugh at me as I wear a brassiere. This is very embarrassing and my eyes water and I blush. My friends think I am crying and tease me more. Please will you tell me how not to be embarrassed when I undress.<sup>34</sup>

Here, it is obvious that the girl is extremely apprehensive about not being able to control the way her friends act toward her when undressing for netball. In effect, on these occasions she is alarmed by the prospects of being exposed to derision on disclosure of the fact that she wears a brassiere. Her acknowledgment of the unpleasantness of having to submit to this derision conveys the awareness of being unprotected. Indeed, McDougall has described the bodily action of embarrassed persons as suggestive of an "inharmonious and therefore un-

pleasant blend of self-assertion and submission..."<sup>35</sup>

On examination of the bodily action considered symptomatic to embarrassment states (see page 55) it is apparent that there is a close resemblance between this type of bodily action and that displayed by nonhuman primates exposed to threatening situations in which they organize what primatologists classify as submissive postures. I have compiled from various primatological studies<sup>35</sup> a representative - but certainly not exhaustive - list of submissive bodily action displayed by nonhuman primates when threatened.

#### NONHUMAN PRIMATE SUBMISSIVE BODILY ACTION

1. avoidance of gaze;
2. turning the head;
3. looking away;
4. lowering the head;
5. moving the tongue in and out of the mouth;
6. bobbing the head;
7. crouching;
8. rapid blinking;
9. shielding the eyes with the hand.

Although the significance of these actions is a controversial issue, it is generally agreed that they perform the function of reducing the high states of arousal precipitated by the experience of threat.<sup>36</sup> In view of this it would be reasonable to propose that the

gaze avoidance action frequently displayed by embarrassed persons could contribute toward the reduction of arousal.

#### Sixth Sequence (Self-Directed Body Involvement)

Generally speaking, the high arousal state concomitant with the experience of threat would exert a strong influence on the actor's deliberation of the course of action that should be followed. That is to say, the actor would formulate a project in accordance with his understanding of what action would facilitate the reduction of the unpleasant bodily experiences that accompany high arousal. Holding to the logic expressed in the prior sequences, it would be correct to assume that this understanding would focus on what the actor must do to gain a sense of predictability and manageability over the features in his phenomenal world. It was the awareness of a not being able to predict or manage these features that initially was responsible for the threat experience.

Self-directed body involvement occurs when the actor in determining what he must do to exert control over the perceived situation comes to the realization that some feature of his body organization was responsible for the experience of exposure and vulnerability associated with the awareness of not being in control when such control is necessary. At this point the actor becomes extremely dissatisfied and disturbed about his lived body as a mode of orientation in the situation; when this takes place the actor no longer expresses concern for the body as an object for others, but rather he becomes aware of his body as a source

of dissatisfaction, anxiety and confusion. In other words, the actor's awareness of his body now is not constituted in his awareness of other's awareness of his body.

### Seventh Sequence (Body-self Inauthenticity)

Body-self inauthenticity represents the essence - of the concern-for-body-dimension-of-embarrassment. *It occurs with the actor's recognition that particular belonging-to-me-features-of-the body invalidate his claim to being able to organize body management features that enable him to exercise control over the situation.* I would postulate that the degree of experienced body concern embarrassment is a function of the actor's investment in the claim of being able to efficiently organize body management features in the realization of some project. For example, a medical student who clumsily ties a surgical knot, ostensibly would not experience the same degree of body-self inauthenticity that would be experienced by an established surgeon who displays the same clumsiness.

Body-self inauthenticity is a potentiality inherent in the performance of any bodily action. In the next chapter I intend to further explore the dynamics of body involvement and embarrassment by addressing the issue of what factors are involved when the potentiality for body-self inauthenticity becomes an actuality. In doing this I will attempt to expand upon the theoretical basis of a sociological understanding of how actors attend to their bodies during social encounters.

To provide some structure for this analysis I will focus on four variables that have been prominent in previous research on embarrass-

ment. These are:

1. Age: the previous research indicates that certain age groups experience embarrassment much more frequently than others;
2. Sex: there are differences between the sexes with respect to what is viewed as embarrassing;
3. Physical Disabilities: An actor who attends to some physical disability during the course of a social encounter, often will experience embarrassment;
4. Low Self-esteem: persons with low self-esteem are thought to be more susceptible to embarrassment.

Each of these variables will be discussed in terms of the concepts and methods introduced in the explanation of the body paradigm procedures. The problems introduced in this discussion represent what I would acknowledge as primary issues confronting the development of a "sociology of the body".

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Spatiality of the Lived Body and Motility" in *The Philosophy of the Body. Rejections of Cartesian Dualism*, ed, Stuart F. Spicker (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970) p.248

<sup>2</sup>He describes a project-at-hand as a "process by which an actor in daily life determines his future conduct after having considered several possible ways of action. The term "action"... shall designate human conduct as an ongoing process which is devised by the actor in advance, that is, which is based upon a preconceived project" in Alfred Schutz "Choosing Among Projects of Action," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 12 No. 2, 1951, 161.

Richard M. Zaner elaborates upon this point by stating that what the actor perceives will depend upon what he is doing or intends to do. He writes: "Perception cannot be divorced from the concrete situation of the one whose perception it is: to see a red stop-light when one's wife is about to give birth, and to see the "objectively same" red stop-light at another time, is not at all the same thing... for the perceived himself." in *The Problem of Embodiment* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 159.

<sup>3</sup>Alan F. Blum and Peter McHugh "The Social Ascription of Motives", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 36, 1971, 100.

<sup>4</sup>For an extended discussion of the point that a consciousness of bodily performance is not in the sense of Cartesian dualism a matter of mind distinct from body viewing the performance of body as something distinct from the actual experience of the body engaged in some mode of orientation or possibility for acting see Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.*, Pp. 250-68.

<sup>5</sup>Blum and McHugh *op.cit.*, p. 103

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103

<sup>7</sup>Calvin O. Schrag, "The Lived Body As A Phenomenological Datum" *The Modern Schoolman*, Vol. 34, 1962, 204-5

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 205

<sup>9</sup>Ethology is a relatively new science which attempts to discover the adaptive significance of behaviour. Lorenz and Tinbergen are responsible for much of the early work in this field. Observations are usually carried out in natural settings. Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Sol Kramer have provided a succinct statement of the primary objectives



of Lorenzian and Tinbergenian ethological investigations. "The ethologist is interested in the survival value of observed behaviour patterns, not with a view towards answering the finalistic question "for what?" but rather to understand in the service of which function selection pressure has determined the evolution of a certain structure.... The entire organism, rather than isolated nerve muscle units within the organism, is the object of study. It is an approach which includes the relations of the organism to its environment (ECOLOGY) and to the members of its own species (SOCIOLOGY)" in "Ethology, The Comparative Study of Animal Behaviour" *The Quarterly Review of Biology* Vol. 33, No. 3, 1958, 181-2 For reference to Tinbergen see his *The Study of Instinct* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951) and Lorenz "The Comparative Method in Studying Innate Behaviour" *Experimental Biology Society Symposium* Vol 4, 1950, 222-68. A recent attempt to assess the importance of Ethology to the study of social behaviour in human groups has been conducted by Hillary Callan *Ethology and Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). Primatology is a branch of ethology which restricts its focus to the various species of primates including man. A large collection of representative works can be found in Irvén DeVore *Primate Behaviour: Field Studies of Monkeys and Apes* (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston 1965)

<sup>10</sup>Jane Van Lawick-Goodall, "A Preliminary Report on Expressive Movements and Communication in the Gombe Stream Chimpanzees" (ed. Phyllis C. Jay) *Primates Studies in Adaptation and Variability* (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1968), Pp. 313-75

<sup>11</sup>An umwelt is the world as it appears to an organism; in this paper it is the phenomenal world of the actor. Basically this construct seeks to represent relations between the environment and the perceptual images of the environment. Uexküll proposed that "the number of objects, which an animal can distinguish in its own world equals the number of functions it can carry out" and "as the number of an animal's performances grows, the number of objects that populate its Umwelt increases, "To construct an umwelt from an actor is to identify the features in this environment that provide him with perceptual and functional cues. "Uexküll has written that "All out human sensations which represent our specific receptor signs unite into perceptual cues which constitute the attributes of external objects and serve as the real basis of our actions" For example, an Eskimo who has no knowledge of European tools is asked to climb a ladder. Consequently, he might say, "but how am I to do this; all I can see are rods and holes." Hence, someone shows him how to climb a ladder. Thereupon the rods and holes of the receptor image acquire a new meaning - the effector image of his own action of climbing a ladder. We acquire an effector image for each of the functions performed with features that comprise our phenomenal worlds. Moreover, "This effector image we inevitably fuse so closely with the receptor image furnished by our sense organs that in the process the features acquire a new quality, which conveys their meaning to us and which we shall briefly term the functional tone. If an object is used in different ways, it may possess

several effector images, which then lend different tones to the same perceptual image. "These tones Uexküll refers to are the features of our phenomenal world. They represent for us possibilities for actions; that is we are aware of features in our phenomenal world as something that we can act on and also act upon us. For a more detailed explanation see Jakob Von Uexküll "A stroll through The World of Animals and Men" (ed. Claire H. Schiller" in *Instinctive Behaviour The Development of a Modern Concept* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1957) Pp. 5-83. Erving Goffman has recently employed the umwelt construct in a way that is similar to that proposed in this paper. He writes that "the individual's immediate world can be one of two places for him: where easy control is maintained or where he is fully involved in self-preserving action." *Relations in Public Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York: Basic Books, 1971) Pp. 238-333

<sup>12</sup>Adolf Woltman "Clinical Notes: The Riddle of the Amazon" *The Psychi-analytic Review* Vo. 58, 1971, 144.

<sup>13</sup>It was stressed in the first chapter that if an actor regarded that aspect of the self being evaluated as insignificant or of little value it is likely that he would not view the possibility of negative evaluations disparagingly. Nor is it likely that anxiety would be experienced if the person believed the power or authority of the evaluators to be of little consequence.

<sup>14</sup>J. H. Van Den Berg *Phenomenological Approach to Psychiatry* (Illinois: Charles C. Thomas 1955) Pp. 56-57

<sup>15</sup>Maurice Natanson *The Journeying Self A Study in Philosophy and Social Role* (Reading: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1970) p. 42

<sup>16</sup>Frances Cook MacGregor et al *Facial Deformities and Plastic Surgery A Psychosocial Study* (Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1953) p. 92.

<sup>17</sup>Belonging-to-me-features-of-the-body are the body management features that an actor is aware of as being visibly audibly or olfactorily perceptible and thus accessible to other actors. The organization of the belonging-to-me-features-of-the body largely determines how persons act toward each other. For example, a child that sticks his tongue out at a parent who is scolding him may have to face the consequences of being addressed as a "cheeky brat". The consequences being the signification or possibilities for action for the parent who confers the "cheeky brat" status. This action may entail striking the child.

<sup>18</sup>J. M. Sattler "A Theoretical, Developmental, and Clinical Investigation of Embarrassment" *Genetic Psychology Monographs* Vol. 71, 1965, 23.

<sup>19</sup>The actor's management of death notifications is excellently portrayed in David Sudnow *Passing On The Social Organization of Dying* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1967).

- <sup>20</sup>Joel R. Davitz, *The Language of Emotion* (New York: Academic Press, 1969).
- <sup>21</sup>J. M. Baldwin *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development* (London: MacMillan, 1906).
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid* p. 204
- <sup>23</sup>John J. MacCurdy "The Biological Significance of Blushing and Shame" *British Journal of Psychology* Vol. 21, 1930, 177-78
- <sup>24</sup>Ernest Becker *The Birth and Death of Meaning* (New York: Free Press, 1962) p. 94
- <sup>25</sup>The concept "arousal" is indeed very complex involving various psychological and physiological measurements. High arousal states do produce unpleasant somatic sensations that organisms seek relief from. For a discussion of the measurements referred to in this paper and their meanings see C. P. Cohen *Reactions To Perceived Somatic Vulnerability* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Kansas 1963.
- <sup>26</sup>J. A. Wada "Modification of Cortically Induced Responses in Brain Stem by Shift of Attention in Monkeys," *Science*, N.Y., Vol. 133, 1961, 40-42.
- <sup>27</sup>Adam Kendon, "Some Functions of Gaze-Direction In Social Interaction," *Acta Psychologica* Vo. 26, 1967, 22-63
- <sup>28</sup>G. B. Schaller, *The Mountain Gorilla* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963)
- <sup>29</sup>Luborsky, B. Blinder, N. Mackworth, "Eye Fixation and Recall of Pictures as a Function of G.S.R. Responsivity," *Perception and Motor Skills*, Vo. 16, 1963, 468-83.
- <sup>30</sup>P. H. Venables and J. K. King, "Level of Arousal and Subclassification of Schizophrenia," *American Medical Association Archives of General Psychiatry* Vol. 7, 1962, 114-19
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C. R. Carpenter *Naturalistic Behaviour of Nonhuman Primates* (University Park: Penn. State Press, 1964)

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### CHAPTER III

#### THEORETICAL PROBLEMS FOR A SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY AS REFLECTED IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE CONCERN-FOR-BODY DIMENSION OF EMBARRASSMENT

A principle point in the discussion of the actor's employment of body paradigm procedures was the ability of the actor to achieve a sense of predictability and manageability over the perceived situation through the organization of the body. In effect, this presumes that the actor has an understanding of what the perceived situation requires of him in terms of exercising control and management over bodily features. Hence, the question that immediately follows this presumption is how does this understanding arise. There is no evidence or indication of any kind that infants and young children experience embarrassment and yet adolescence is often cited as a period during which embarrassment is experienced most frequently. For example, parents will comment on the insouciance displayed by their children with respect to concerns for body modesty; however, these same children upon reaching adolescence are preoccupied with bodily appearance. Obviously, between infancy and adolescence an understanding has developed to enable these children to interpret their body as a source of potential embarrassment. What has occurred to make this understanding possible? This question is intimately linked to what is described in psychological and sociological literature as the emergence of self.

On close inspection of this literature it becomes apparent that

the emergence of self follows from a consciousness of bodily needs. Freud recognized the importance of this consciousness in his statement, "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface."<sup>1</sup> His statement was expanded in footnote form to emphasize the assumption that "the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body..."<sup>2</sup> Thus, for Freud the sensations experienced on the body surfaces are of primary importance in the genesis of self.

Many theories concerned with the emergence of self indirectly provide support for Freud's assumption with the argument that an awareness of self implies a priori an ability to differentiate the body from the external environment; in effect, there must be a polarization of environment and body. The actor must be able to recognize what constitutes his body and what does not constitute his body. That is, the actor must perceive a boundary between body and not-body before the self can emerge.

From a Piagetian organismic-developmental point of view the infant first becomes aware of a boundary between body and not-body through the exploratory manipulation of surrounding environmental stimuli.<sup>3</sup> The infant engaged in this exploration learns to orient his behaviour in terms of egocentric spatial coordinates such as up-down or near-far. Through stimulus localization the infant is eventually able to psychologically differentiate his body from the surrounding environment. This awareness of a boundary between body and not-body is strengthened through physical

contact with others. The tactile sensations received from bodily interaction with others is contrasted and compared with the absence of such sensations. The child begins to experience himself as a unique autonomous entity with clearly definable boundaries between body and not-body.

Palombo and Bruch elaborate upon the significance of this experience by offering a concise description of the role it plays in the organization of the body. They write:

It is an equally important adaptive task for the child to connect the signals of his bodily needs with some plan of action to fulfill the needs. For a very young child the object of this action is outside his body - he acts in a way that causes someone else to hold him or feed him. Since other people respond in different ways to his actions he must learn a rather complex set of connections between his needs and his actions, routed as they are through individual objects outside himself. The parts of the body in which needs arise and the parts of his body which can perform signaling actions are in a sense held together by other people. If the infant were trying to organize his experience in the most economical way, as a topological network, he would see himself as a complex of surfaces and cavities, tubes and openings, related to the "world cavity" by surfaces, orifices and sensory receptors<sup>4</sup>.

This description is particularly important in that it suggests a possible orientation to the problem of ascertaining what is involved in the actor's acquisition of the understanding he requires to employ body paradigm procedures.

A child's initial awareness of being able to influence how others respond to his bodily needs may in fact represent the emergence of a rudimentary body-self. In other words, initially an awareness of exerting influence over the bodily action of others would impress upon the child that certain bodily action displayed by others is necessary if he is to

accomplish the project of fulfilling a bodily need. Moreover, it would be reasonable to expect that feelings of well-being or security are closely tied to bodily need fulfillment. Thus the child would soon discover that the attainment of such well-being is dependent upon his successful organization of body management features. Success being determined by how readily the bodily action of others contributes to the fulfillment of some bodily need for which body management features have been organized. This does not necessarily imply that the child is expressing other-directed body involvement. If bodily need fulfillment is not accomplished, the unpleasant physical sensations directly attributable to the lack of accomplishment presumably would orient the child to his body as a source of discomfort and not as an object for others. For the latter to occur it would be necessary for the child to develop a sense of competency in the organization of body management features. Moreover, the bodily action of significant others would stand as the major referent of this competency.

This complex issue of competency is extremely important in accounting for differential susceptibility to concern-for-body embarrassment in terms of variables such as sex, age, self-esteem and physical disability. From the perspective of the actor I would define competency as the understanding of being potentially capable of exercising control over phenomenal world features through the formulation of projects that prescribe ways to act as well as predicting the probable ways others will act. In this definition the words potentially capable require special emphasis. They imply the possibility that the actor in



certain situations may not be able to exercise control over features in his phenomenal world when there was an expectation that such control could have been maintained. This expectation is necessary if the actor is to employ the body-self inauthenticity procedure.

Data reflecting processes of parental disciplinary regulation of children's anal sphincter control could provide direction in describing the conditions that may underlie the development of an understanding of competency with respect to the organization of the body. Suttie suggests an interesting rationale for proceeding in this manner<sup>5</sup>. He states that with the introduction of toilet training there is a noticeable change in the parent-child relationship. The child in learning to regulate his sphincter muscles discovers that to possess control over evacuation is to have the ability to affect how his parents act toward him. This discovery represents the child's first experience with social power. That is to say, the child's awareness that he can choose the wrong place and time to defaecate and displease his parents provides the child with the understanding that he is potentially capable of controlling others.

An additional point that could quite easily be taken-for-granted is that the capacity to control as illustrated with anal sphincter regulation is dependent on the availability of correctly functioning skeletal and neuromuscular structures. The importance of this point will be apparent in discussing the concern-for-body embarrassment experienced by persons with a physical disability.

Gesell and Ilg note that voluntary control over bowel function is not possible until certain changes take place in the central nervous system.

"As a child grows older, a higher mechanism is gradually imposed upon the lower. Increasingly complex connections are made with nerve fibers which go to and from the brain. Voluntary control becomes possible only as these nerve connections take place."<sup>6</sup> When anal training does become possible, the type of discipline employed, of course, would vary according to the dictates of the culture. According to Silverberg in our society discipline takes the form of expressions of disgust and disapproval<sup>7</sup>. The child is taught to defaecate at regular times and in prescribed places. These first experiences with time and place limitations over defaecation may represent for the child an initial awareness of the importance of contextual support elements in the formulation of projects associated with a particular body-self. In other words, the child in acquiring the understanding of competency with respect to his anal sphincter regulation would discover that recognition from parents follows from his defecating in the correct space and during an appointed time. Kardiner posits the observation that an awareness of parental recognition for toilet habits may be the child's first experience of being socially accepted.<sup>8</sup> I would extend that observation by noting that parental disapproval of toilet habits may impress upon the child that others expect him to be responsible for the organization of body management features. *Moreover, it would represent the child's first exposure to a prevalent belief in our society: namely, body control has positive social value in that it secures social acceptance; a loss of body control has negative social value in that it invites social ridicule and rejection.* The adoption of this belief would prepare the child for the understanding he would require to employ body paradigm procedures.

The social and psychological dynamics of anal sphincter control also reflects our cultural preoccupation with body cleanliness. Excremental body products such as faeces and urine are regarded as filth that should be immediately disowned upon elimination. A child is taught to invest these products with extremely negative qualities. Consequently, body zones that come in contact with excretory products are thoroughly cleansed and covered. The child learns that any association with these areas is potentially contaminating. Such contamination can eventuate in social rejection. Kubie supports this contention in a rather dramatic statement by suggesting that for the child "his body contents become poisonous, burning, explosive and destructive substances, generating terror from within if retained, terror of contact when excreted, and instruments with which to destroy others in turn"<sup>9</sup>. He expands this statement by noting its significance to a child undergoing training in the cleansing rituals that usually follow the elimination of excretory products.

"...when the child is taught to disown excrements as filth, it is simultaneously being taught to disown its own genitals as equally filthy excremental products of its own body.... Therefore, that which is dirty will make one sick and sickness and dirt become synonymous.... From this step to the conclusion that all excretions are dirty, that the excretory zones and apertures as well must not be touched, that therefore pleasure from these zones is itself dirty and bad, that if you touch yourself (that is, masturbate), you touch dirt and actually become dirty and therefore fall sick, is a well known chain of consequent ideas."<sup>10</sup>

The key issue here is that others assign meanings to the bodily parts of the child which assume value connotations irrespective of their objectively appraised anatomical significance. Thus, the child learns that to expose

bodily parts considered bad or inadequate is to eventually be confronted with disapproval. This disapproval may take the form of significant others withholding their recognition, encouragement and support. In other words, it would convey a lack of acceptance. *Such disapproval may exert a notable influence on the development of the child's understanding that competency is expressed not only in the actual performance of bodily action, but also in the management of the accessibility of body areas and parts during social encounters.*

#### BODY AWARENESS, ADOLESCENCE AND EMBARRASSMENT

In order to further explore the factors responsible for the actor's understanding that enables him to employ body paradigm procedures, I will now consider why the adolescent appears to be more susceptible to embarrassment than any other age group. First, what is adolescence? Often there is considerable confusion surrounding the definition of this term. Schonfeld attributes this confusion to terminological problems surrounding maturational phenomena descriptions associated with adolescence.<sup>11</sup> Taking these problems into account, he provides the following definition:

Adolescence is neither a homogeneous nor a precipitous period, but rather an evolving one, beginning with the earliest hidden changes in endocrine activities and continuing until sexual and physical development is relatively complete.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of adolescence being an evolving period relates to the fact that there are a number of morphological and physiological changes occurring in the body. Changes particularly associated with the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. The increased sexual drives

resulting from this development undoubtedly would effect transformations in attitudes and values toward the body. I would argue that the striving for independence from parental control often documented in studies concerned with adolescents could be closely related to these transformations. That is to say, such independence would facilitate the abandonment of the child self-image which is incompatible with the awareness of a sexually mature body.

In many cultures the onset of sexual maturation is celebrated with initiation rites that confer the status of adult on the person.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, these rites usually involve the mutilation of the genitals. Such mutilation would serve to dramatize appropriate sexual development. In effect, it would provide symbolic notification of the fact that the person is capable of assuming the responsibilities and privileges consonant with the adult status.

Our cultural ways of dealing with persons undergoing sexual maturation contrast sharply with those utilizing initiation rites. There are no formal ceremonies marking the transition to sexual maturity. The adolescent although possessing the bodily capabilities to assume adult responsibilities, is rarely accorded the status of adult. This would in part explain the preoccupation with bodily appearance and performance characteristic of this period. Adult roles presuppose sexual maturity. Hence, when the adolescent is denied access to these roles he would express concern about the adequacy of his sexual development. I would propose that this concern is intimately linked to the adolescent's evaluation of his competency in social encounters. It has been shown

that there is a high correlation between excessive interest in bodily appearance and function and feelings of social inadequacy.<sup>14</sup>

Another point to consider is that the adolescent abandonment of his child self-image and protracted entry into the world of the adult presumably would make peer group acceptance a decisively important issue for this age group. Moreover, to be accepted may be interpreted by the adolescent as having appropriate physical characteristics. This interpretation would follow from the assumption that the intensification of body awareness occurring during adolescence would result in this age group placing a great emphasis on the appropriateness of sexual development as a criteria of acceptance. Appropriateness may be evaluated in terms of how similar the bodily parts of an adolescent are to others in his group. Thus if bodily parts differentiate an adolescent it may be extremely difficult for him to maintain and even achieve acceptance. This is apparent in the following embarrassment episode:

My worry is that I haven't got a big enough bust. I am 13. Some girls who are slimmer than I have a "32" bust and mine is only "29". When we go in showers at school the girls who are bigger than me laugh at me because I am a great deal smaller, so you see I get very embarrassed.<sup>15</sup>

In this instance, the girl has been subjected to ridicule for failing to conform to peer group standards of breast development. Obviously, experienced maturational deviation of this sort does not reflect a physiological aberration, but what it does represent is a negative response to a belonging-to-me-feature-of-the body by significant others.

I would argue that much of the concern-for-body embarrassment

experienced during adolescence can be attributed to maturational deviation. Schonfeld has indicated that sexual development during adolescence is often discordant in the sense that with some persons physical changes are greatly accelerated, where as with others they are delayed.<sup>16</sup> Any delay in the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics would make the adolescent particularly vulnerable to body-self inauthenticity. *In other words, the adolescent's ability to express competency in the formulation and execution of projects may depend greatly on an awareness of possessing sexual characteristics indicating qualities culturally recognized as masculine or feminine.*

Verinis and Roll have discovered through experimentation that muscular development, height, penis length and hirsutism are qualities typically associated with masculinity.<sup>17</sup> Secord and Jourard have devised an empirical index they refer to as "body-cathexis" which measures the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with various parts and processes of the body.<sup>18</sup> They found that for males large bodily dimensions were especially desired and valued; the presence or absence of "largeness" relative to particular parts of the body determined negative or positive feelings toward those respective parts. Females, on the other hand, express a preference for small body proportions with the notable exception of breasts. *These qualities recognized as indicative of masculinity or femininity appear to be related to the various potentials for bodily action inherent in the body-self; especially the type of bodily action associated with the accomplishment of projects culturally defined as specific to gender.* For example,

small body proportions would enhance and facilitate lightness and gracefulness in movement. A woman concerned with attracting the attention and recognition of men may consider this movement to be a necessary feature of her performance. To gain peer group recognition an adolescent male may have to be successful competitively in physical contact sports. His success to a large extent would depend upon muscular development. Here the essential point is that bodily action can be labelled as masculine or feminine according to the culture. If a male formulates a project involving the display of masculine bodily action it would be necessary for him to possess those qualities culturally associated with masculinity. Similarly, if a female formulates a project involving the display of feminine bodily action it would be necessary for her to possess those qualities culturally associated with femininity.

#### SEX DIFFERENCES IN EMBARRASSMENT

A felicitous comment in keeping with the previously entertained assumptions regarding differences in male and female bodily action is provided by Buytendijk who asserts, "To be discovered undressed, seen through whether literally or figuratively, has an entirely different meaning for both sexes, as men and women experience their own bodily existence and their being-in-the-world in such different ways."<sup>19</sup> If there are differences between the sexes with respect to what is considered embarrassing could it be accounted for in terms of a male bodily existence and being-in-the-world being different from that of the female?



First, what type of evidence exists to substantiate the claim that the male and female do in fact experience a different bodily existence and being-in-the-world? There are a myriad of observations indicating sex-linked differences in emotional behaviour, body perception and preference for bodily parts. It may be possible to derive some inferences from these observations.

Calden, Lundy and Schlafer discovered that when men and women were asked to rate the degree of satisfaction with bodily parts, the women were significantly more critical of their legs and lower section of their bodies than the men.<sup>20</sup> Wittreich and Grace in experimentation that involved males and females viewing their bodily parts through lenses which distort shape, observed that females perceived changes in their legs much less frequently than males.<sup>21</sup> They argued that the sex difference in perceiving distortions in leg appearance was a function of differential anxiety about the appearance of legs. In other words, males and females may attach a different significance to their legs. Indeed this argument would seem plausible in view of our cultural values which place a greater emphasis on the female body than they do on the male body as an object of display and attractiveness.

Concern about body attractiveness is encouraged in the socialization of the female. A female child learns at an early age that her bodily appearance has a determining influence on her acceptability to others. Consequently the female discovers that her ability to predict and manage the way others attend to her depends in many situations on her competency to execute projects that contribute to the attractiveness of her bodily

appearance. On the other hand, a male child is discouraged to attend to his bodily appearance as a potential object for display. However, significant others impress upon the male child the importance of muscular development and bodily agility. In effect, this could be the basis of a sexual differentiation in experienced bodily existence. The male child discovers that muscular development and bodily agility greatly contribute toward his ability to exercise control over phenomenal world features. In contrast to the female child who is encouraged to recognize that acceptance from others follows from the execution of projects that control how others act toward her, the male child learns that acceptance can be gained through the actual expression of competency when acting toward others. Thus, the male may be more aware of his body as experienced bodily action directed toward features in his phenomenal world than the female who would be more conscious of her body as the recipient of others bodily action than the male. For example, a man who is introduced to a stranger of the opposite sex may experience his body primarily as a potential capability for accomplishing the project of responding to the introduction to the stranger. Contrastingly, a woman in the same situation primarily would be aware of her body as a organization of belonging-to-me-features-of-the body that could be attractive to the stranger.

The immediately apparent implication is that the male attributes a greater significance to projects involving the organization of body management features for acting toward others whereas the female invests more concern in projects designed to control how others act toward her. To be quite general, the male is more concerned about acting on phenomenal

world features rather than being acted upon by those features and the female expresses a greater concern about being acted upon rather than acting on those features.

Acting on and being acted upon constitute two basic types of bodily awareness in the actor's interpretation of the relationship of his body to the perceived situation. *If the actor interprets his body as acting on features then he has defined the relationship between body and perceived situation as one in which his bodily action is directed toward features in his phenomenal world. The relationship between body and perceived situation when the actor interprets his body as being acted upon, is one in which his body is defined as the recipient of others bodily action.* The actor's image of his body-self resulting from the former relationship could be described as the *active body-self image* and in the latter relationship it could be described as the *passive body-self image*.

Two points regarding the susceptibility to and degree of experienced body-self inauthenticity emerge from this active - passive distinction. Cultural attitudes, values and expectations predispose the woman in our society to a more sensitive and highly developed awareness of their passive body-self images while predisposing men to a greater awareness of their active body-self images. Garai provides some support for this proposition in a study indicating sex differences with respect to level and type of anxieties that men and women frequently encounter:

"Women's anxieties center more frequently around their lack of competence in interpersonal relations, they take personality flaws more

seriously, are more likely to possess a negative self-image, and exhibit a greater need for approval and reassurance than their male counterparts. Men's anxieties center more often around their failures in their occupations and lack of accomplishments.<sup>22</sup>

A male would have a greater investment in accomplishing a project involving a predominant awareness of the active body-self image; conversely, a female would be more concerned about a project involving a predominant awareness of the passive body-self image. Consequently, I would expect that the degree of experienced body-self inauthenticity would vary considerably according to sex and the predominance of either the active or passive body-self image. If the degree of body-self inauthenticity is discussed in terms of a simple high-low, and active-passive dichotomy, the degree of experienced body-self inauthenticity could be constructed:

TABLE TAO  
PROBABLE SEX DIFFERENCES IN THE DEGREE OF EXPERIENCED  
BODY-SELF INAUTHENTICITY  
ACCORDING TO THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE  
ACTIVE OR PASSIVE BODY-SELF IMAGE

		PREDOMINANT BODY-SELF IMAGE	
		PASSIVE	ACTIVE
DEGREE OF EXPERIENCED	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE
BODY-SELF INAUTHENTICITY	LOW	MALE	FEMALE

This table suggests that theoretically there is a greater probability of women rather than men experiencing a high degree of body-self inauthenticity when the passive body-self image is predominant; whereas, when the active body-self is predominant it is more probable that men would experience a high degree of body-self inauthenticity. The variable self-esteem may provide some clarification of these propositions regarding the active-passive distinction in body-self image.

## SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY-SELF INAUTHENTICITY

Coopersmith in conducting extensive experimentation into the Actor's experience of esteem, offered as one of his major findings that "self-esteem is significantly related to the individual's basic style of adapting to environmental demands"<sup>23</sup> Four invariant factors that measure the extent of adaptation are:

- 1) Power: the ability to influence and control others;
- 2) Significance: acceptance and attention of others;
- 3) Virtue: adherence to moral and ethical standards;
- 4) Competence: successful performance in meeting achievement demands.<sup>24</sup>

The actor's estimation of his ability to display these factors determines his experience of esteem in the perceived situation. High self-esteem presupposes that the estimation was extremely favourable and implies that the actor can adapt well to environmental demands. Low self-esteem presupposes an unfavourable estimation and implies that the actor is poorly suited to meeting situational exigencies.

The actor's interpretation of the relationship of his body to the perceived situation also represents a form of adaptation. This could be illustrated with a hypothetical case of nurse confronting a physician in a hospital setting. The difference in status would require the nurse to organize body management features in a way that conveys deference to the physician. However, prior to this organization the nurse must have adopted the passive body-self image. That is to say, the nurse is

aware that situation demands of her that she submit to the authority of the physician. Any display of authority over the physician presumably would meet with serious criticism and disapproval. Such a display would follow from the nurse's adoption of the active body-self image. The point is that the adoption of either the active or the passive body-self determines how body management features are organized in the execution of a particular project. If the nurse is to avoid criticism, which in this case is tantamount to adapting well to the situational exigencies, it would be necessary for her to adopt the passive body-self. Bodily action indicating deference would follow from this adoption. In other words, the nurse recognizes that she is not acting on but rather being acted upon by the physician. She experiences her body as being subjected to the physician's authority. To manage and insure some sense of predictability the nurse displays submissive body posture. From her point of view this would be understood as exercising control in the perceived situation.

The actor's competency in assuming the active or passive body-self in accordance with the exigencies of the situation would be of critical importance to his understanding of exercising control. It would be reasonable to expect that actor's who experience problems associated with the vacillation between active and passive body-self images are particularly susceptible to body-self inauthenticity. Evidence to this effect is indicated in findings that reveal the characteristics of persons who generally experience low self-esteem. First, it should be noted that persons with low self-esteem have been found to be more vulnerable to

to embarrassment than persons with either high or medium self-esteem.<sup>25</sup> Rosenberg has recorded statements typically expressed by persons who experience low self-esteem.

...when you are small it's much easier making friends because you don't feel you are going to embarrass yourself meeting new people ... But when you get older it's not so easy. You begin to think what a fool you can make of yourself in the eyes of a person you don't know. I kind of become shy and withdrawn.<sup>26</sup>

Shyness often is regarded as the antithesis of assertiveness and the aggressive independency normally attributed to those who are highly motivated toward volitional control of phenomenal world features. It indicates an unwillingness to be exposed to the appraisals of others. Moreover, it may indicate an unwillingness to interpret an active body-self image. Findings consistent with this reasoning are provided by Coopersmith who notes "... that persons with low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable to unfavourable opinion and are fearful of evoking anger. They apparently are greatly distressed by either conflict or personal rejection and prefer to remain silent and passive rather than expose themselves to such exchanges and stimulation."<sup>27</sup> Such extreme sensitivity would negate the possibility of a favourable estimation with respect to the interpretation of ability to express competency in organizing bodily action concomitant with an active body-self image. Thus the person may attempt to avoid social encounters necessitating such bodily action. In fact, persons with low self-esteem indicate a preference for being alone as revealed in following statement:

You could say I'm antisocial, but I don't really put too much stock

in friends... I do prefer to be alone... I don't feel really comfortable with people.<sup>28</sup>

Persons who experience low self-esteem become tense and feel awkward in the execution of projects associated with the interpretation of an active body-self image. Two such persons state:

I am kind of hesitant in a large group of people. I'm kind of shy... I don't know what a crowd does to me... I get all quiet... I have always been that way.

I don't know how to talk to people. What I say doesn't come out what I mean... I might be wrong in what I say and then it will start something. So I just keep things to myself.<sup>29</sup>

The obvious reference to a fear of taking the initiative in social transactions expressed in these statements by persons who generally experience low self-esteem may be accounted for in terms of their understanding that there is a greater probability of not being able to exercise control in situations where their active body-self image is predominant. Theoretically this understanding may contribute toward a susceptibility to body-self inauthenticity. That is to say, an awareness of having an extremely limited capacity to predict and manage phenomenal world features may augment bodily tension to a point where it is detrimental to the execution of smoothly co-ordinated motor performance. Consequently, awkward, hesitant, strained and nervous bodily action may be displayed. Body-self inauthenticity would be experienced if the person attributed to the accessibility of this bodily action for others, a failure to express competency in the execution of a particular project.

It would appear that a marked dissatisfaction with the capacity to



adapt bodily organization to social encounters is concomitant with the experience of low self-esteem. This dissatisfaction arises as the result of frequent failures to exercise control over body management features. Furthermore, it could be responsible for feelings of inadequacy with respect to the ability to maintain bodily control.

In the discussion of the child's learning to regulate bowel movements it was stressed that bodily control is dependent upon functional capabilities. Moreover, these capabilities are assessed by the actor in terms of their efficiency or potentiality to accomplish a formulated plan of bodily action. *Thus they furnish the actor with a frame of reference in which he develops standards of bodily performance.* The development of these standards would be of decisive importance to the actor's appraisal of what the perceived situation requires of him in the way of an organization of body management features. *In other words, an understanding of bodily performance standards would enable the actor to formulate projects that are within his potential range of accomplishment.* For example, a person who cannot dance may avoid situations where others would expect him to perform this bodily action.

It is a characteristic feature of our society that shared standards of bodily performance constitute an essential criteria of group membership. *To be more specific, the actor achieves membership in a group by demonstrating a potentiality*

*to accomplish group prescribed projects in a manner equivalent to the established members.* The actor's appraisal of his competency would be determined by his estimated capacity to provide such a demonstration. An unfavourable appraisal may eventuate in negative individuation; that is a feeling of being different from other members. Subsequently, the actor would be apprehensive about the possibility of others withholding their recognition, acceptance or support as the result of the experienced difference. In effect, this apprehensiveness is intimately related to the concern of appearing normal. In the first chapter it was noted that in terms of the actor's practical understanding to achieve the appearance of normality is necessary to gaining acceptance; to appear otherwise is to risk the possibility of being rejected. I will conclude this theoretical discussion with a consideration of how the issue of appearing normal is reflected in the employment of body paradigm procedures by persons who through injury or disease have sustained a physical disability.

#### BODILY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY

From the perspective of the actor normality is an attribute conferred on the image of the body-self when in the estimation of the actor standards of bodily performance exhibited in the execution of a particular project conform to the expectations of "significant others". For instance, MacCurdy has

pointed out that in some Southern European countries "men who urinate shamelessly in public will not only retire for defaecation but will lock the door even when the possibility of interruption is remote."<sup>30</sup> These men achieve normality with respect to this particular bodily action by employing temporal scheduling and ecological segregation that conforms to other's expectations regarding the accessibility of belonging-to-me-features-of-the body. In effect, the achievement of normality involved a plan of bodily action that required an organization of body management features and the manipulation of contextual support elements. The formulation of this plan presupposes an awareness of being able to exercise control over certain bodily parts. Therefore what factors predisposing an actor toward concern-for-body embarrassment may arise if an accident or disease renders nonfunctional a body part normally utilized in a plan of bodily action?

Reva Rubin has concluded from observations of patients undergoing surgery that:

To lose or be threatened with the loss of a complex coordinated, and controlled functional activity which has been achieved and integrated into the personal system is to lose or be threatened with the loss of self.<sup>31</sup>

A study recently conducted by Kaplan-De-Nour provides strong support for this observation.<sup>32</sup> He notes that patients who have had a bilateral nephrectomy which results in a complete loss of urination will sometimes complain of not feeling like

a human being. This could indicate that for some bilateral nephrectomy patients the volitional control of urination is necessary if they are to conform to other's expectations of being human.

Here the implication is that a functional limitation may prevent the actor from maintaining body performance standards he considers necessary to the accomplishment of projects associated with a particular body-self image. For example, a man who invests considerable value in executing projects requiring strong endurance and physical agility may be rendered paraplegic as the result of an accident. The consequent impaired mobility and appreciably decreased physical endurance would prove to be a serious handicap to such projects. Plans of bodily action normally employed in the execution of projects prior to the accident would have to be reformulated. The unfamiliarity with the revised plans may result in a concern about their efficacy. In other words, he would be particularly sensitive to how others are reacting to the revisions; a sensitivity that would increase his propensity to adopt the observed attitude.

It is a well documented fact that uneasiness and tension are often displayed by nondisabled persons viewing someone with a disability. On occasions this uneasiness will give way to expressions of complete revulsion as indicated in the following transcript of an interview with a girl who partici-

pated in a small group that included a man wearing a cosmetic hand prosthesis:

"It nauseated me. That's why I ran out. The sandwich [which she had been eating] began to smell... I smelled it again. The look of the hand where it came to the ridge... discoloured, yellow-greenish (grimaces and shows disgust and shrinks from the discussion and has to be encouraged to go on).<sup>33</sup>

A disabled person's awareness of such responses undoubtedly would cause him to reflect on his ability to achieve normality. Through this reflection he may arrive at the understanding that the accessibility of the disabled portion of his body is the major impediment to normality achievement.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, (London: Hogarth, 1961,) p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Piaget *The Construction of Reality in the Child* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1954) Pp. 34-60.

Ernst Cassirer provides an articulate critique of the piagetian model of self emergence. He writes: "Once he (man) has formed a distinct representation of his own body, once he has apprehended it as a self-enclosed and intrinsically articulated organism, it becomes as it were a model according to which he constructs the world as a whole. In this perception of his body he possesses an original set of coordinates to which in the course of development he continually returns and refers..." in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Vol. 1 Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 206-297. The differentiation of body and world is implicit in the self theorizing of Mead who contends that the self can only emerge through interaction with others. In this interaction the person takes the role of the other and incorporates it as part of his performance. However, the person must be able to make the distinction between his roles and the roles of others to prevent a loss of identity. In effect this presupposes an awareness of self as existing independently from others, George Herbert Mead, "The Genesis of the Self and Social Control" *International Journal of Ethics* Vol. 35, 1925, 251-273.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley R. Palombo and Hilde Bruch "Falling Apart: The Verbalization of Ego Failure" *Psychiatry* Vol. 27, 1964, 252.

<sup>5</sup> I. D. Suttie *The Origins of Love and Hate* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. 1935) Pp. 40-75.

<sup>6</sup> A Gessell and F. L. Ilg *Child Development* (New York: Harper Bros., 1949) p. 35

<sup>7</sup> W. Silverberg *Childhood Experience and Personal Destiny* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1952) Pp. 102-110.

<sup>8</sup> A Kardiner *The Individual and His Society* (New York: Columbia University Press 1939) p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence S. Kubie "The Fantasy of Dirt" *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* Vol 6, 1937, 411

- <sup>10</sup>Ibid p. 461
- <sup>11</sup>William A Schonfeld "The Body and the Body-Image in Adolescents Gerald Caplan and S. Lebovici in *Adolescence Psychosocial Perspectives* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1969) p.28
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid p. 27
- <sup>13</sup>A Systematic analysis of initiation rites can be found in Frank W. Young *Initiation Ceremonies* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965)
- <sup>14</sup>H. Bruch "Puberty and Adolescence: Psychologic Consideration," *Advances in Pediatrics* Vol. 31, 1948, 219
- <sup>15</sup>James Hemming *Problems of Adolescent Girls* (Toronto: Heinemann, 1960) p. 130
- <sup>16</sup>William A Schonfeld *op.cit.*, Pp. 42-48
- <sup>17</sup>J. S. Verinis and S. Roll "Primary and Secondary Male Characteristics: The Hairiness and Large Penis Stereotypes" *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 26, 1970, 123-26
- <sup>18</sup>P. F. Secord and S. M. Jourard, "The Appraisal of Body Cathexis: Body Cathexis and the Self," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, Vol. 17, 1953 343-47
- <sup>19</sup>F. J. J. Buytendijk "The Phenomenological Approach to the Problem of Feelings and Emotions" in *Feelings and Emotions*, ed. M. L. Reymert (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950) p. 138
- <sup>20</sup>G. Calden, R. M. Lundy, and R. J. Schlafer "Sex Differences in Body Concepts" *Journal of Consulting Psychology* Vol. 23, 1959, 378
- <sup>21</sup>W. J. Wittreich and Marea Grace "Body Image and Development Technical Report, March 1955, Princeton University, Office of Naval Research.
- <sup>22</sup>Joseph E. Garai "Sex Differences in Mental Health" *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 81, 1970, 127
- <sup>23</sup>Stanley Coopersmith, *The Antecedents of Self-Esteem*, (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1967) p. 46
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid* p. 38
- <sup>25</sup>Morris Rosenberg *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1965) p. 173

- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid* p. 174
- <sup>27</sup>Stanley Coopersmith *op.cit.* p. 68
- <sup>28</sup>Morris Rosenberg *op.cit.* p. 184
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid* p. 175
- <sup>30</sup>John T. MacCurdy "The Biological Significance of Blushing and Shame" *British Journal of Psychology* Vol. 21 1930, 179
- <sup>31</sup>Reva Rubin, "Body Image and Self-Esteem" *Nursing Outlook*, June 1968, p. 22
- <sup>32</sup>A Kaplan-De-Nour "Some Notes On The Psychological Significance of Urination," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 148, 1969, 615-623
- <sup>33</sup>Beatrice A. Wright, *Physical Disability A Psychological Approach* (New York: Harper & Brothers 1960) p. 63



## CHAPTER IV

### DIRECTIVES FOR FUTURE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF THE BODY

The exploration into the dynamics of the concern-for-body dimension of embarrassment has yielded many propositions which suggest a new perspective for sociological inquiry. Generally speaking, the focus of this inquiry which I refer to as a "sociology of the body" provides an interdisciplinary basis for elaborating upon the actor's awareness of his body during the course of social transactions. That is to say, the "sociology of the body" facilitates the integration of biological, psychological and social analysis by embracing the methodological assertions and theoretical assumptions of these diverse scientific persuasions. In order to discuss the scope of this enterprise it will be necessary to provide some clarification of the fundamental tenets from which it evolved.

Parenthetically, implicit in the articulation of the body-self construct and its variants is the assumption that for purposes of research a distinction between the body and the self would not have any potential value. The implication emerging from this assumption is that any conceptualization of the self invariably must include some consideration of the actor's body awareness either as a potentiality for the realization of a project or as actual bodily action. This is particularly evident with respect to the term self-control.

In the course of this study it was emphasized that self-control involves the acquisition of bodily performance standards that conform to the expectations of significant others. An interesting illustration of this point is found in the employment of the colloquial expression "to let one's hair down." This expression is usually addressed to persons who display bodily action that others consider inappropriately rigid or restrained. The failure to abandon such rigidity or restraints inevitably precipitates a withdrawal of group acceptance.

The power of others to impose bodily performance standards is inextricably interwoven with a theme continually stressed in this paper: namely, the actor's understanding of his ability to express competency in the exercise of bodily control contributes to his sense of predictability and manageability over phenomenal world features. A professor who is uncertain of his ability to present a lecture to an audience of colleagues would experience considerable bodily tension in situations requiring this performance. The tension arises from the awareness of not being able to predict the type of reception the lecture will receive and the subsequent feeling of not having in reserve the skills considered necessary to manage audience response. This feeling would conflict with his understanding that others expect him to display such skills by virtue of his assuming a lecturer status.

The influence of bodily sensations on the actor's employment of interpretive procedures has received considerable attention in this study. It was proposed that the actor's sense of well-being fluctuates in accordance with variations of bodily tension. The interpretation of body-self inauthenticity is dependent upon the awareness of vulnerability and exposure concomitant with the bodily tension arising from the understanding of not exercising competent bodily control. The experiential descriptions of embarrassment suggest that this tension may express itself as marked voluntary muscle activation. Such activation may in part represent an attempt by the actor to regain a sense of control over body management features. Observational studies may indicate that following a loss of experienced bodily control an actor will engage in excessive self-directed bodily action such as palm-rubbing or head-massaging.

Indeed, a phrase often addressed to persons who in the course of a social encounter fail to maintain bodily control is "pull yourself together". In most psychiatric schools of thought the absence of bodily control over an extended period of time when there is no evidence of physical impairment is generally considered symptomatic of mental disturbance. In other words, to fail to pull oneself together is to risk the possibility of being labelled mentally ill. The association of a loss of bodily control with this type of illness may account for some of the uneasiness and discomfort usually experienced by persons

who witness hysterical laughter, prolonged crying, violent anger and embarrassment.

Mechanisms of social control are largely reflected in the imposition of various types of restraints on bodily action. These range from the invocation of unwritten and common place rules such as "children should be seen but not heard" to elaborate codes of law governing the extent to which a person may physically intrude upon the bodies of others. In fact, it may be possible to develop a general theory of social control from an analysis of the factors responsible for the articulation of rules regulating bodily control. The lucid insights of Mary Douglas could provide some direction for this development. She proposes that during social transactions:

"The body is expressing both the social situation at a given moment, and also a particular contribution to that situation. Inevitably then, since the body is mediating the relevant social structure, it does the work of communicating by becoming, (a) an image of the total situation as perceived, (b) the acceptable tender in the exchanges which constitute it."

Thus in a situation where a person displays grief by crying he may in effect be conforming to societal regulations regarding the thresholds of permissible tolerance of bodily relaxation and control. Similarly, a woman may feign a display of embarrassment to indicate to others her awareness that this experience is expected of her. Douglas considers the occurrence of laughter as an expression of the social situation.

She writes:

What does it mean when one tribe laughs a lot and another tribe rarely? I would argue that it means that the level of social tension has set low or high thresholds for bodily control. In the first case, the full range of the body's power of expression is more readily available to respond fully to a small stimulus. If the general social control settings are slack, the thresholds of tolerance of bodily interruption will be set high.<sup>2</sup>

Empirical studies of variations in the degree of awareness of exogenous restraints on bodily action in accordance with the type of social setting could provide an index that reveals one estimate of the range of the actor's standards of social conduct. Age, sex, educational, class and social status differences in the mean range of these standards for assessing the acceptability of potential bodily action could be derived. Persons who deviate from these respective means may encounter considerable difficulty in achieving social acceptance. For example, in our society there are limited opportunities to express the physical state of one's body. This is particularly evident with respect to physical discomfort. If a person experiences pain it is generally expected that he will not burden others outside of a medical context with this fact. Those who disregard this expectation or unwritten rule restraining bodily action conveying discomfort are labelled with abusive terms such as whiner and crybaby which denote social disapproval.

This issue of restraints may have important ramifi-

cations for studying the relationship between body awareness and the actor's disposition toward sociopathic activities or psychopathological behaviour. Levy in clinical examinations of children subjected to parental disciplinary means involving restrictions on the freedom of movement noted that during these periods of restriction the children would become hyperactive and highly excitable.<sup>3</sup> Hyperactivity was attributed to tension arising from movement restraint. Here the essential point is that an awareness of restraints on bodily action in part is experienced as bodily tension. This is dramatically illustrated in Antarctic research stations where "Man seem to be innately aware of the irrevocable nature of an actual blow in an environment where for months to come one must daily meet one's antagonist face to face"<sup>4</sup> In this situation the rigorous control of bodily action indicating other-directed hostilities is thought to be responsible for a number of bodily tension indicators such as headaches, dyspepsia, abdominal pains and insomnia.

The colloquial expression "up-tight scene" often used to describe highly structured social situations where restraints on bodily action appear unreasonably restrictive suggests the strain of bodily tension. Similarly, the expression "cool-it" is addressed to persons who do not appear to be managing such tension in a manner that meets with social acceptance. Such persons have "lost their cool". Their bodily

actions indicate to others that they are not capable of exercising control over the situation. In effect, the employment of body paradigm procedures reflects an attempt to control bodily tension through a consideration of the relationship of the body to the perceived situation.

The interpretation of body-self inauthenticity resulted from the awareness that restraints on bodily action had not been correctly administered. Thus the actor may redress the situation by formulating a project that will enable him to exercise control over body management features. This would involve an assessment of what bodily action conforming to the situational exigencies would be socially acceptable. In other words, the project is concerned with the problem of "cooling it". This type of "cooling it" associated with the interpretation of body-self inauthenticity indicates a sensitive regard for others. Here the implication is that social sensitivity may largely depend upon the type of body awareness described in the body paradigm sequences. In fact, a loss of social sensitivity may be reflected in the inability to experience embarrassment. This view is supported by Baldwin who contends that:

The loss of bodily sensitiveness seems, for the most part, to go with loss of moral sensitiveness. The dulling of the social sense in general, as seen in ethical decay, frequent violations of social requirements and habitual relaxation of attitude with reference to the claims of either physical or moral propriety, tends to make the reaction of blushing infrequent and unintense.

We often hear of persons who have "forgotten how to blush". Yet the blush may grow more and more vivid as the social sense grows more and more refined.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed lay theories of inadequate social adjustment or antisocial behaviour often involve the metaphorical expression "being out of touch" which suggests body estrangement imagery. Persons who display serious mental disturbances are thought to be out of touch with reality. A person who has difficulty establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships is out of touch with others. Those who display considerable awkwardness when interacting with others do not have the correct touch for establishing social relationships. Conversely, a person conveys touching sentiments when he achieves a strong sense of interpersonal relatedness.

These lay conceptions may not be far removed from scientific fact when it is considered that one's first relationship with others primarily involves bodily sensations arising from tactile experiences. Moreover, there is firmly supported evidence indicating that schizophrenics and persons with sex chromosome aberrations may differ from the rest of the population in terms of their body awareness. For example, psychological evaluations of men with extra X or Y chromosomes have revealed many personality disturbances ranging from psychosexual confusion to an extremely low capacity for dealing with bodily tension in a manner that is not socially disruptive.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, in conclusion it would be reasonable to



assume that explorations into the dynamics of body awareness may offer new insights into the processes underlying social conflict and acceptance. It may also provide a new approach for examining self-concept phenomena. An approach that portrays various experiences of the self such as self-control, self-esteem, self-image and self-consciousness in terms of relationships of the body to the perceived situation. This would contrast sharply with the position of cognitive theories of self expressed in terms of a dualistic conception of self and body. Implicit in this orientation is the assumption that the self can be apprehended when phenomenologically eviscerated from the body. The generally unsuccessful attempts to translate this eviscerated self into operational terms for generating empirical research attests to the necessity of a new approach.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mary Douglas "Do Dogs Laugh A Cross-Cultural Approach to Body Symbolism" *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, Vol. 15, 1971, 389

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid* Pp. 389-390

<sup>3</sup>David Levy "On the Problem of Movement Restraint" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* Vol. 14, 1944, 654

<sup>4</sup>Phillip Law "Some Psychological Aspects of Life at an Antarctic Station" *Discovery* Vol. 21, 1960, 433

<sup>5</sup>J. M. Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development* (London: Macmillan, 1906) P 216.

<sup>6</sup>Of course, there is considerable controversy over the influence of an extra Y chromosome on social behaviour. However the most recent study undertaken by Lytt D. Gardner and Richard L. New characterized XYY men as passive, extremely dependent and incapable of controlling their impulses. They concluded that XYY men "had a poor adaptation to social reality, a repugnance for action and a poor knowledge of the imperatives of social life." "Evidence linking an Extra Y Chromosome to Sociopathic Behaviour" *Archives of General Psychiatry* Vol. 26, 1972, 221. Many males with an extra X chromosome express dissatisfaction with their body to the extent of desiring the body of a female. For a summary of the body disturbances attributed to an extra X chromosome refer to Hans Forssman "The Mental Implications of Sex Chromosome Aberrations" *British Journal of Psychiatry* Vol. 117, 1970, 353. The literature on body awareness in schizophrenia is quite extensive. A summary can be found in S. Fisher and R. Seidner "Body Experiences of Schizophrenic, Neurotic and Normal Woman" *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* Vol. 30, 1963, 252-257 and Hilde Bruce "Falsification of Bodily Needs and Body Concept in Schizophrenia" *Archives of General Psychiatry* Vol. 6, 1962, 18-24

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