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Thomas E. Janoski
University of Kentucky, tjanos@uky.edu

Chrystal Grey
University of Kentucky

Darina Lepadatu
University of Kentucky

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Thomas Janoski
Sociology Department
1525 Patterson Office Tower,
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40506-0027
E-mail: tjanos@uky.edu
859-257-4418

Chrystal Grey
Sociology Department
1523 Patterson Office Tower,
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40506-0027
E-mail: cyhend0@uky.edu

and

Darina Lepadatu
Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice
100 Chastain Road, Building 22, Room 4067
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591
E-mail: dlepadat@kennesaw.edu

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MULTIPLE AND RANKED GENERALIZED OTHERS IN

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST THEORY

WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR DIFFERENCE AND INEQUALITY

ABSTRACT

Mead and Blumer propose the important role of the generalized other but this concept has been largely overlooked in later symbolic interactionist theories and research. This has implications for the social psychology of difference and inequality, especially since the generalized other can be a powerful tool as W. E. B. DuBois' concept of "dual consciousness" points out. Blumer's "sense of group position" has been used to focus on difference, but this term usually requires a structural leap. To re-emphasized the generalized other in symbolic interactionist theory, we make five points: (1) the social construction of identity involves multiple-selves based on multiple-generalized others; (2) this involves both internalization or externalization of views; (3) generalized others may be positive or negative, and generalized others are ranked in terms of importance to the self; (4) generalized others are framed by one's self in that some acquaintances are emphasized and others ignored; and (5) difference and sense of group position springs from these rankings.

Keywords: multiple generalized others; symbolic interactionism; social constructionism; difference.

Symbolic interactionist theories have long dealt with difference using the self in interaction with race, ethnic and gender diversity; however, these explanations of difference do not always employ the very tenets of symbolic interactionism (SI) itself. In most SI work, the "generalized other" (GO) is often overlooked and the "self" dominates theoretical and empirical discussion. Further, multiple generalized others are generally not recognized. More recent research on multiple GOs combines internal self-conversations with literary or discourse theories—Burr (2009) on dialogism, Slocum-Bradley (2009) and Gillespie and Cornish (2009) on discourse, and Archer (2003, 2010) on reflexivity—but they are not directly concerned with difference. Holdsworth and Morgan (2007) come the closest to Mead by adding fluidity to the GO, but they give brief mention of different others. But the bypassing of the GO in symbolic interactionism causes a more inward-focused approach to the self, and makes it harder to have an outwardly-focused SI that could construct "others" to better explain inequality and contribute to solving agency-structure problems. To have difference beyond the basic individual and external world level, one must at least compare two conceptions of "others," but the study of the self alone does not make this apparent. Schwalbe et al. (2000) clearly focus on "othering" and inequality from the "outside-in" (i.e., externalization) with an SI format, and we attempt to complement their work using the basic theory of SI with the addition of an "inside-out" (i.e., internalization) approach that balances attention to ones' many selves with corresponding multiple generalized others. And once multiple GOs are recognized, they can be studied, compared, ranked, and viewed as sympathetic or threatening in assessing one's place in the world of diversity.

Ranked multiple "generalized others" can be used as a means of explaining the social construction of difference in a transformation of a "sense of group position." Too often SI

approaches to social interaction come close to explaining difference by using a nearly structural "sense of group position." And by difference, we use a wide focus that can be constructed around families, gang or team members to larger groupings of class, race and gender (i.e., any in- or out-group). In showing how group difference is constructed and transferred between people using "the generalized other," we emphasize multiple generalized others" connected to multiple selves. In this way difference comes from being positively perceived by one generalized other and negatively (or less positively) viewed by another.

We proceed in five steps: (1) showing how the "generalized other" has been initially described and then swept aside in most SI theories, (2) showing how theories of difference have been constructed in SI theory without explicitly using the GO, (3) making five points on reemphasizing the GO in the construction of the self, (4) connecting the GO and difference, and (5) providing an overall model of multiple GOs in SI.

The Generalized Other in Traditional Symbolic Interactionism

Mead's theory of the self clearly centers on the concepts of the "I," the "me," and the GO, and how they form the self in interaction with other individuals and groups. The "me" represents the socialized aspect of the self that makes presentations to the outside world where people observe the "me." The "I" reviews and objectifies the "me" as others reflect their performance evaluations via the looking glass self, and it represents the sometimes unpredictable and creative part of the self that is tactical and decisive (Lewis, 1979). Mead defined the GO as "the organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self" (1934:154).[1] For Mead, the GO is constructed from many different occurrences of taking the perspective of the other, which can be seen as a social network of acquaintances and friends.

The GO provides the opportunity for reflexivity when the actor takes him or herself not only as a subject but as an object as well (Mead, 1934). It is through the GO that the community exercises control over its individual members. These attitudes toward the other then reflexively act upon the "I," the "me," and the "self." The GO represents one's reflections on the sum total of the "reflected appraisals" of others toward one's performances, and can be viewed as a generalization about the observations of the various "me's" that are performed. Mead's concept of GO is a fundamental theoretical concept that forms the foundation of intelligence in the "mind," the basis of the self-consciousness in the overall "self," and the link to social structure and community in "society" (Mead 1934, 2002:190-8). The GO refers to the possibility of the internalization of norms through the process of interaction with other members of society, and can be formed only in a social or virtual group. It is often the basis of morality, as the ability to gain a moral consciousness depends gaining the perspective of the GO (Mead, 1934).

Mead rarely uses "the looking glass self," but it provides a basis for the GO: (1) imagining one's performance before another, (2) developing some understanding through empathy about their judgment of your performance, and (3) one's subsequent intellectual and emotional reaction to that judgment (Cooley, 1922:184). This alone is not the GO, but when the looking glass self is combined with framing others, it impregnates the self with the "social." This step would then lead to a full conception of the GO.

Mead is ambiguous on multiple GOs, especially concerning race or gender. On the one hand, he most often mentions the GO in the singular. On the other hand, he mentions that people belong to family, political parties, friendship circles, nations, classes, political parties, clubs, corporations, and debtors/creditors as "social group(s) as a whole" (1934: 156-9). These could provide a basis for multiple GOs. In his 1927 lectures, Mead briefly mentions multiple GOs in

baseball games, public opinion and "the voice of god" (1982:145). Some theorists are highly

critical of Mead on this ambiguity. Meltzer says that Mead "oversimplifies the concept by

assuming…a single universal generalized other" (1994:51). Charon (2007:77) says that Mead

"does not always make it clear if the individual has just one generalized other or several" and

Lewis claims that "Mead's own statements about the generalized other are not theoretically

sophisticated enough to account for…complex interactions" (1979:283).[2] If these statements

have merit, then it would be incumbent on symbolic interactionists to clarify these over-

simplifications (Meltzer) so that more "complex interactions" (Lewis) can be addressed.

While Blumer's account of the self and the GO (1969) generally follows Mead with a

few brief mentions of the GO, but in one telling interaction, he delves deeper into this term in a

series of letters from 1979 to 1982. Blumer lays out six levels of the GO: (1) "abstract human

group life" or humanity, (2) an "abstraction of the common meanings of society," (3) "the

abstract role of one's particular segment or circle in society," (4) an individualized version of an

"abstract role in society" or "one's special circle," (5) the role of participants in a "given

concrete situation" where "the GO would shift from one situation-area to another" (e.g., from a

baseball game to a wedding), and (6) a "unique version of the complex of roles in a given

situation-arena" (Blumer, 2004:117-8). He says that "the number of GOs in a society would

correspond to the number of different social acts in that society…in which he was prepared to

participate," and consequently, he saw it as "embracing large combinations of separate acts"

(2004:126). These letters are an insight into Blumer's thoughts about multiple GOs, but he never

published these views on his own, and many of his responses are contingent—"If Mead meant

this, then that aspect of the GO would result."

Goffman's dramaturgical approach focuses on one set of presentations of self in the front stage to intended audiences and another set of presentations to the back stage to fellow performers or supporters. His distinction between the stage and the audience leads to an important insight that could connect to the GO. Clearly, Goffman is thinking of two distinctly different "GOs," but he does not refer to the "I," the "me," or the GO. In this phase of his work, he is more concerned with roles and ritual theory rather than placing front stage and back stage into a SI framework (Collins, 1988). In Goffman's later work, he used the "frame," which could be connected to the GO. He develops multiple frames and mentions "anchoring" processes that connect an activity to the "primary frameworks of particular social groups" (1986: 247-300). In addition to switching frames, he allows for frame breaking, both of which keep this process from being deterministic (1986:3, 25-7).

However, Goffman looks at these frames or interaction orders as somewhat episodic, not as how people construct multiple GOs.[3] Goffman frequently said that "(m)y perspective is situational" (1986: 8) and this tends to crowd out the GO. Although he often refers to groups, he seems to avoid viewing groups and their social construction as part of one's self formation process. To Goffman, the ensemble of actors is necessary, but he does not analyze them as multiple or singular GOs. In other words, his audience is passive, perhaps too much like a theater audience. While focusing on the self, Goffman generally avoids the basics of SI (i.e., the I, me and GO) and does not generate a theory of the GO and difference. This is needed to create "others" and to generalize about "situations." Yet, in the end, all three theorists—Mead, Blumer and Goffman—are sufficiently malleable to include multiple GOs.

Symbolic Interactionist Theories of Difference

For Blumer, the racial prejudice of the dominant group is a matter of the racial identification that one makes of one's self and others, and the way the out-group is conceived in relation to the dominant group. In focusing on the feelings of the dominant racial group, Blumer describes their beliefs in intrinsic difference, superiority, and privileges, and fears that the other will eliminate those privileges (Blumer, 1958, 1965; Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). Four points are important. First, group feelings point to and depend on the positional arrangement of the groups. This process is especially helped along by the active molding of these beliefs, privileges and fears by interest groups, and the whole process develops in a historical process rather than being created anew in each interaction. Second, the source of prejudice for Blumer specifically lies in the felt challenges to these dominant group feelings with: (1) affronts to feelings of group superiority, (2) familiarity or transgressing the boundary line of group exclusiveness, (3) encroachments on proprietary claims to goods or services, (4) challenges to power and privilege, and (5) direct and sometimes indirect economic competition for jobs (Blumer,1990:201). Prejudice becomes a defensive reaction and a protective device to each of these challenges. Often these situations evoke emotions of fear, and societies built upon difference often use fear to keep these others in their place.

Third, the sense of difference is not created spontaneously but by interaction that is embedded in a history of past contacts, especially initial contact. Subsequent experiences and interactions may form the sense of group position in several ways, whereby it is sharpened or weakened. It may be deeply entrenched and resist change, or may barely take root (Blumer, 1990: 202). However the experiences may mold the sense of group position, it is clear that the sense of group position formed by the dominant group defines and redefines the subordinate group.

Fourth, a sense of group position is initially molded and shaped by the elite members of the dominant group (e.g., politicians in speeches, ministers in sermons, radio hosts on talk shows or blogs on the web). They repeat narratives that attack and question character of the subordinate group, and stimulate individuals to energize the dominant group. If the feelings and views are not internally opposed, they fuse and grow (i.e., Mead's "fusion of the I and the Me"). Thus, the collective image of the subordinate group and the sense of group position of the dominant group are established.

However, three implications arise from the subordinate group being seen as an abstraction: (1) the actual definitions of the subordinate group do not derive from experiences with specific individuals in daily association but through transcending characterizations of the group as an abstract identity; (2) the definitions created in the public arena are privileged compared to other arenas and issues; and (3) actual subordinate experiences are subsumed to events or sentiments that arouse strong feelings in the dominant racial group's identification. Spokespersons legitimate authority by communicating in public discussions in the media. These elites add to interpersonal interaction, and groups conceive of themselves and others through collective processes, especially through the public media. It is this "sense of social position," emerging from public encounters, that gives race prejudice its basis.

But spokespersons for the dominant group, who publicly characterize the subordinate group in a negative way, may be heeded or ignored. If ignored, they have little effect, and while supported by some, they may be laughed at by others (e.g., the failed religious crusade to ban rock-and-roll as music of the devil). On the other hand, spokespersons can fabricate powerful narratives that can cause riots (e.g., Tulsa in the 1920s and Detroit in the 1940s). Finally, the

actions that elite groups take in directing the interpretation of events are not always seen by most participants.

The problem with Blumer's "sense of group position" and Shibutani and Kwan's similar concept of "group consciousness" (1965:199-223) is that it appears to be more structural than interactionist. It is similar to expectation states theory that sees the origin of status hierarchies (i.e., difference) as coming from "doubly dissimilar encounters" where one group has fewer resources and they also have some sort of group difference that is already identifiable. Knowledge of these differences "diffuse widely throughout the population and gradually take hold" (Ridgeway et al., 1998:334; 2009). However, this is not an especially "social constructionist" approach. A symbolic interactionist sense of group position should also come from the experiences of people in daily interaction (Blumer, 1958:6). On one occasion, Blumer (1965:335-36) mentions the "inner citadel of the color line" in connection to a sense of group position, and this suggests a back stage of "intimate and private circles" of micro-interactions, and a front stage of more rigid racist groupings (Esposito and Murphy, 1999:402).

Blumer's theory needs to go a bit further to connect intersubjectivity to the sense of group position, and this can be done in a social constructionist way by using multiple GOs in creating differences between dominant and subordinate groups. Otherwise, there is an underlying tension in a sense of group position exists between "the Blumer who emphasizes ongoing interaction among human beings" and "the Blumer who emphasizes the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups" (Williams and Correa, 2003:750). In our view, multiple GOs are critical in the construction of difference, especially on how the sense of group position emerges from the mechanisms of the Meadian framework with the "I," the "me," and multiple GOs.

Media and Elites

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Goffman also focuses on difference through stigma, and deference and demeanor. Stigma refers to three attributes that are discrediting (Goffman, 1963): (1) physical deformities, (2) weak character; and (3) the "tribal" stigmas of race, nation, or religion. Stigma is closely related to deference and demeanor in rituals. Deference is "the appreciation an individual shows of another to that other" and it can be through avoidance, praise, or other actions. Demeanor is more indirect as it refers to behavior communicated "through deportment, dress, and bearing" (2005:77). These terms focus on messages coming back to an I to form a GO, though Goffman does not use these terms. The third concept of "tribal stigma" proposes group difference especially if it can be inherited. But Goffman does not expand on "tribal stigma"—a concept of difference ever so close to race and gender—even though it may be inferred to as "abominations of the tribe" (Berbrier, 2002:556). Goffman's front and back stages could combine with tribal stigma and translate into dual consciousness with multiple GOs (Smith, 2006:101-2; Williams, 2002). But he does not pursue this lead as he concentrates on situations.[4] But we contend that the "other" needs to be further specified through multiple and ranked GOs in an increasingly diverse society.

Balancing the GO and the Self

Interpretation of Mead's theory calls for further emphasis on the mechanisms that compel the "me" of the self to internalize the norms and values of various GOs and apply the evaluation of these GOs to difference.[5] In SI, this can be done in four ways: (1) the concept of role is overused in SI, and in clearing the conceptual terrain, it needs to be delimited; (2) multiple GOs exist and they routinely create multiple selves; (3) a GO is socially constructed by each person through selecting and framing who is important or not, and not the result of an imposed or taken role, and this process of social construction involves internalization of others' views and

externalization or projections of one's own preferences; (4) GOs may be positive and negative in terms of being a benefit or threat towards the self, and they are most often ranked, which often creates difference.

1. Role, Social and Personal GOs. The social construction of multiple GOs in SI needs to clarify the concept of "role." The use of role is ambiguous in three ways. First, Mead and Blumer use "role" in their term "taking the role of the other" which often means the empathetic process of "putting yourself in the place of another." This makes roles an intrinsic part of the GO process. Second, Mead and Goffman use "role" as a term to designate a situation rather than behavior conducted with fixed norms and values. This is more akin to Goffman's reference to role in dramaturgical role-taking in the presentation of the self in situations. A third group of social psychologists (Turner, 1956, 1962; Stryker 2008, 2002; McCall and Simmons, 1966, 1982; Burke and Stets, 2009) use the term "role" in a more formal way that refers to the norms and values attached to a position in society that sometimes leads to a more structural theory of society.

But if all three approaches are taken, nearly all social behavior is "role behavior." For instance, should we study the "racist role" or "sexist role?" Further, "taking the role of the other" is making internal social psychological processes into role behavior. This wide and sometimes ambiguous use of "roles" comes close to putting the term into a reductionist position that identifies all social interaction as role behavior. From our approach, some social interaction involves roles and other interaction does not, and there is a circumscribed place for "role" as a position in society with clear norms and values.

These different meanings need to be specified, which can be done by putting different adjectives in front of "role" or by using different terms. Social interaction begets various GOs

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from the bottom up, and institutions and organizations can impose roles from the top down. Individuals perceive "concrete" or "particular others" engaging in behavior, which will be later described as "staging presentations of selves" through a "me." The perceptions of the behaviors of these concrete particular others may be grouped into a GO as with a "group GO" composed of a set of friends or a "situational GO" composed of an audience or group of people at a party. One might like to impose a role of friend or partygoer on these interactions, but behaviors are so variegated that "role" is problematic (e.g., party-goers cannot be clearly classified into friends, acquaintances, or even enemies). Even using Goffman's approach to public behavior, these "informal roles" are really practical experiments in "staging presentations of selves."

On the other hand, there are social situations where roles are of great import. For instance, family interactions may lead to conceptions of "mother" and "father" as constructed roles, but these roles become more formalized in historical traditions and laws that have major implications about how mothers and fathers should act. Child abuse or neglect can easily land a parent in jail. From another perspective, organizations often formulate positions with job descriptions and these positions become clear roles with norms and values. The professions with the concrete roles of nurse, teacher, and doctor would fit this use, especially with their codes of ethics and specialized training. Non-performance of such a formalized or "structured role" can lead to losing the "structured role" (e.g., children can be removed from their mothers or fathers, workers can be fired, or professionals can lose their licenses). In these cases the socially constructed GOs meet the more formally constructed aspect of roles.

Using a more nuanced view of "roles" can help define and specify encounters of the self and GO, and despite claims to the contrary, avoids sliding all social interaction into roles as a structural aspect of society (e.g., Stryker, 2002; McCall, 1970). This is very close to Fields et

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al.'s view that "we cannot feel shame" or many other emotions "without having developed a generalized other" (2006:158).[6] Second, in self-perception theory, these behavioral assessments with their feelings and attitudes may be constructed or revised after the fact rather than before by an active evaluation and framing of one's GO (Bem, 1972; Laird, 2007).

2. Multiple GOs. While Mead and Blumer certainly did not emphasize multiple selves, William James (1983) referred to them in 1890. And even more importantly, W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness" provides a clear starting point on racial difference as African-Americans have two different selves for white and black communities (2005). And in the last two decades, the concept of multiple selves has become popular (Weigert and Gecas, 2003; Beck et al., 2003; Thoits and Virshup, 1997; Markus and Wurf, 1989). Following SI theory, if there are multiple selves, there must be multiple GOs. Hence, African-Americans have white and black generalized others.

The first direct reference to possible GOs comes with Shibutani's work using "reference groups." Robert Merton developed "multiple reference groups," positive and negative reference groups, and the selection of reference groups (1957: 240-50, 302-8). Shibutani (1961:514-32; 1955) picked up on reference groups, and after the preparatory, play and game stages, extends Mead's stage theory to the "reference group stage" where the interacting individual links to several reference groups. Society is seen as a mosaic of patterned interactions and relationships that are grouped by many different reference groups, each with their own "perspective." Charon comments that in Shibutani's approach "the individual uses several reference groups, has several perspectives, and interacts with a number of social worlds, and…therefore…the individual can no longer be said to have a single generalized other" (2007: 77-8, 109-14).[7] However, other than Hewitt's mention of "reference others," Shibutani's use of "reference groups" has been avoided

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by SI (1988). Nonetheless, Shibutani hits upon something useful that can be developed. In effect, these stages demonstrate the development of the GO, which Mead demonstrated with the game stage of understanding other roles on a baseball team. Shibutani is describing the next step with the say "left fielder" realizing that he or she is on one team and that they are playing a competing team (Mead, 1934:150-64). Instead of the "reference group stage," this could be called the "group difference" stage that contrasts an in- and out-group (e.g., a Red Sox batter may see a Yankee pitcher as a hated "other," or a Bronco linebacker may want to crush a Patriots quarterback). One GO reflects in-group praise for a base hit or sack, but the out-group GO reacts with disapproval for exactly the same act. This sports analogy can be generalized for many group activities from cliques in schools, the deaf, gay activists, and racial supremacists (Berbrier, 2002; Harris, 2009). Shibutani builds on Mead to differentiate multiple GOs (as reference groups) and add to Mead's stage theory (the reference group stage).

Stryker sees a similar situation coming out of social networks that are intersected by cross-cutting boundaries of class, ethnicity, age, gender, and religion. People live their lives in relatively small social networks (Stryker and Burke 2000). This structural SI perspective delimits the boundaries of all these social networks, which block or permit the individuals' access to people in networks. For instance, racial social structures would block an African-American in the 1950s from the social networks leading to good jobs and elite clubs. Individuals continually have to adjust their identities and emotions depending on the norms of the network. And if a good fit is lacking, the individual may wither in neglect and eventually leave (Stryker, 2002; Fine, 1990). While Stryker does not develop the concept of the GO, his concept of cross-cutting boundaries and "small and specialized networks" suggest multiple GOs.

3. Selecting, Shaping and Framing. An adequate view of multiple GOs need concepts with to perceive multiple GOs from ones social networks (i.e., networks are not automatically homogenous). The self is not passive toward its GOs as it actively frames and shapes them. Each person only takes some of what they see from reflected appraisals and ignores other feedback (Kinch, 1963; Lundgren, 2004). Thus, a "selective reinforcement" process that is clearly not deterministic exists between self and "significant and generalized others" (Yeung and Martin 2003: 844; Quarantelli and Cooper, 1967; Miyamoto and Dornbusch, 1956). When the young are malleable during primary socialization, "internalization" may be the most important result of the messages coming from multiple GOs. During adolescence teenagers often rebel against a familial GO (e.g., parents, kin and teachers), and construct new or modified selves as peer groups dominate (e.g., "goths," "hoods" or "nerds"). As one's sense of self becomes firmer, people often engage more in "externalization" as they try to impose their "selves" and the way the GO should interpret them and others (e.g., be "a good soldier," "bad-assed gang members," or "professional doctors") (Yeung and Martin, 2003:846). Identification others are important for solidarity since "they are like me" or "they are like what I want to be"; and valuation others that consist of others who pass judgments on you, often negatively (e.g., gangs, juries, ethnic or racial groups, etc.) (Turner and Stets, 2004; Turner, 1988, Turner, 1956).

Building on Turner and Stets (2004) and Schwalbe et al. (2000) in table 1, these processes correspond to internalization and externalization as they occur in a number of ways.

**********Table 1 here***********

First, groups of higher status people, especially those with merit-based talents and forceful personalities, internalize their legitimacy and often externalize their evaluations of others—"self-justified othering"—often accompanied by "powerful virtual selves" (see Table 1, 1+2+3) to

which low status subordinates may respond with "accepted others" or "defensive othering" (table 11+12 and 14+15) (Schwalbe et al., 2000:422-9; West and Fenstermaker, 2002:146-63).[8] Protected high status people, owing their position to ascription (e.g., family or inherited positions), do the same but with less legitimacy (5+6 and 8+9) and they are also subject to the higher status persons' externalization. They form their own internalization that is short of "powerful virtual selves" as some are weak links or wastrels who try to manipulate their situations with lower status persons.

Second, with the groups of low status persons attributions of deference and subordination respond to externalization with accepted and defensive othering, and the internalization of the views of generalized others (in table 1, rows 4+5+6 and 7+8+9). They are often subjected to high status persons with less legitimacy often engage in defensive and oppressive othering that subordinates may not really accept but they accord them some deference.

Third, when encountering externalization or valuation, lower status people create or modify their own group's GOs through internalization. Usually these are positive evaluations but when confronted with negative imposed GOs, they often modify their GOs, and may create new subcultures. DuBois' "dual consciousness" is a good example of this (12, 15 and 18 in table 1). Each GO then leads to the construction of specific and multiple selves, but clearly, the GO plays a role in creating or modifying that self. Selves may internalize the view of critical GOs and accept imposed evaluations as with the internalization of labeling theory or Garfinkel's degradation ceremony (1967). For instance, shame may occur when one views life from the eyes of the GO and realizes that others see one's "base motives" rather than one's "glowing self-image," and embarrassment may occur when one takes of the role of the GO and realizes that

one has "bungled a presentation of self" (Shott, 1979:1325). And if serious enough, this GO may be carried from one interaction to another.

Fourth, while this construction benefits from many of the terms used by Schwalbe et al. (2000), table 1 also includes the rows 7+8+9 and 16+17+18 that indicate processes that involve some resistance or countering of the dominant processes of inequality. Not all lower ranked high status and lower status persons accept "oppressive others" as some are protesters who engage in resistance and "counter-othering" (e.g., Malcolm X's re-visioning of white behaviors). These actions may range from minor slowdowns to outright rebellions with many gradations in between. Thus, GOs have a combined and interactive process of "assertion and assignment" (Berbrier quoting Cornell, 2008:479) with externalization through framed, shaped and selected others, and internalization by imposed groups, behaviors and structures.

4. Positive and Negative GOs are Ranked. GOs have a relationship between each other and often have positive and negative characteristics (Perinbanayagam, 1975:514-5; Lawler et al., 2008:523; Crouch, 1958). Some GOs are more intrinsic to the construction of the self and are highly internalized, while others may be minor. Other GOs are disputed and resisted. For instance, African-Americans with a dual consciousness have one GO composed of fellow African-Americans and many of them in this GO have a favorable viewpoint of each other. They may also have a white oppositional GO that they negatively internalize and actively resist. Both have an effect, but it is clear that GOs are not always positive, and that the existence of negative GOs are the clear indicators of difference, whether it is based on race, class and gender, or any other aspect of life (e.g., teams, in-crowds, gamblers, religions, etc.). Thus, the others' actual assessments of a person do not lead deterministically to one or another GO (Yeung and Martin, 2003; Ichiyama, 1993; Felson, 1985, 1993, and counter Archer, 2003). Shibutani's master

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processes of ethnic relations are at work in these positive and negative evaluations (1970). Differentiating processes occur with stable relations of inequality, but they are often brought about by more disjunctive processes coming out of protest and conflict. Sustaining processes involve mutual support in stable and homogenous social worlds, and they are brought about by integrative processes whereby groups become identified as similar (Shibutani, 1970; Wacker, 1995).

Negative and positive appraisals imply a ranking that is "ordered into a hierarchy of relevancies" (Lewis, 1979: 284). Burke goes further on the "self-verification" among identities and comes close to multiple GOs in his "general principles" where he mentions multiple identities that are compared (2003:203). Although Burke focuses more on identity and only implies a GO, his focus is analogous to ours, as we could nearly replace identity and "reflected appraisals" with a combination of selves and GOs.

In evaluating how much influence two GOs might have, a process similar to differential association theory operates whereby the "I" evaluates two different groups in terms of an accumulation of definitions, values, or positions that one has in common with one group or the other (Title, Burke and Jackson, 1986; Akers and Jensen, 2006). However, the exact mechanisms of ranking in terms of the GO's importance to the self may be conscious or unconscious (Quillian, 2008). Ranking is done partly on the basis of comfort level of emotions, but also on the basis of aspirations for social and cultural capital as in interaction ritual chains—one may admire a group of people with whom they currently feel very uncomfortable (Collins, 1988, 2004). In this sense, two networks and their values are weighed both rationally and emotionally in terms of positive and negative experiences. The relative weights of these experiences will shift one toward one or the other GO, but third or fourth GOs may also exist. For instance, one may

decide between the upwardly mobile GO does not accept you, and the poor neighborhood GO who does. But a kin group that is strongly in favor of upward mobility may turn the tide toward the upwardly mobile GO in forming the self.

Changes or disturbances in the feedback coming from a GO can lead to changes in self-identity. Laub finds that "turning points were critical to understanding processes of change" for criminals, and that these turning points away from crime tended to come from "job stability and marital attachment in adulthood" (2006:243). More generally, Burke (2006:85, 94) finds three reasons for identity changes which we can mold process of the GO: (a) persistent discrepancies in feedback from a GO leading to slow change, (b) multiple identities may be activated together, but their verifications invoke opposing meanings leading to erratic change, and (c) catastrophic events that wholly impose new GOs and identities.

Further, a coalition theory of GOs would supplement the balance of positive and negative experiences (e.g., differential association theory). Thus, primary group GOs based on family, school and peer groups might combine with work, religious, political, friendship, recreational, voluntary and other GOs. In some ways, a cross-pressure theory of social constructed GOs could be developed. But GOs need not always be ranked when people see themselves in equally valued groups. For instance, one might equally value GOs based on church members, golf buddies, and neighbors. GOs may simply exist in their own co-equal and valued spheres, but it is when some are negative and ranked below other GOs that they assume importance in constructing difference.[9]

Modeling Selves and GOs

The processes outlined here of multiple selves, me's and GOs are shown in Figure 1.

**********Figure 1 here***********

The basic model shows how a self can monitor situations (1 and 2) and the "I" (3), and then it presents various "me's" (5) through staging (4) in social interaction situations (8). The self collects the reactions of the others in social interaction by constructing GOs (6 and 7), which are then fed back into the self and the "I." Through socialization, individuals may have a number of GOs (e.g., my family, people at work, whites and blacks, etc.). While Goffman's staging and the presentation of self are not elaborated here, the framing that goes on concerning the multiple GOs in item 6 of figure 1 is examined more closely. "Selecting" places the people who fit into one's various GOs and it also involves a sense that one knows how others think about these groupings. More internalized "framing" involves the social organization of those people concerning situations, emotions, values, and norms that make this GO somewhat coherent and worthy of being recognized. "Ranking" involves seeing each GO as positive, negative, or neutral, and assessing this GO's importance to the individual's self. While ranking may be intense due to positive and negative aspects of difference, ranking may also be of lesser importance for people whose lives are less contested. The different GOs are the sum of (a) one's impression of their own staged and framed performances before others (3→4→5→8 in figure 1, (b) one's selecting, shaping and ranking of the judgments and emotional reactions involving these GOs (7→6), and (c) one's estimate of the others' judgments or reactions (8→7).

Regarding difference, an individual may feel either high or low rank (to make it simple), and those status rankings are associated with various positive or negative emotions resulting in GOs being validated, questioned or rejected. Various selves are then constructed or reconstructed based on the feedback generated by a number of GOs. It is important to note that these GOs are framed or constructed themselves. Individuals can choose to ignore people as inconsequential, biased, or programmed; however, some people in coercive situations cannot be overlooked (e.g.,

prisoners cannot ignore guards without consequences). This is how the GO differs from roles. Organizations and social interaction of others create roles, but the GO is based on those persons whom the individual recognizes as being important enough to monitor, select, and shape. One can even operate in the interstices of roles. The components of the GO need not always be direct contacts. They can also consist of indirect contacts who may comment on their presentations of self-made to others (e.g., reading a racist blog on-line from a person one may never meet). Thus, GOs have a connection with direct interaction through the looking glass self, and also an indirect connection without interaction with the generalized group. But they do not include everyone in the community, as is sometimes implied by Mead.

The importance of multiple and somewhat specific GOs is that researchers should pay much more attention to how people frame the others to whom they attend, and also pay attention to those whom they might ignore. This would also involve the differences between "perceived GOs" (what you think the GO sees) and "actual GOs" (what the others actually see) (Quarantelli and Cooper, 1967:296). The easiest way to identify a GO is when a person refers to "we," "us", "them," or "those people," and the plural "you" (Wiley, 1994; Dunn, 1998). One most often constructs "we's" or "they's" at work, in one's social life, and in one's family and neighborhood. The key to finding "multiple GOs" and in the process finding "multiple selves" is to locate who might be in the GO being discussed. This is socially constructed "sense of group position," not imposing a role or group position (Turner, 1956; Turner, 1988; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Stryker, 2002). This would benefit by more attention to social network data for each GO and attention to who knows whom in these networks since the transmissibility of norms and behaviors may be dependent on the density of these networks.

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Difference emerges from this model from two directions: (1) it is socially constructed by the GO in many different encounters (internalization), and (2) it is socially imposed from the group level often in a historical context (externalization). The first approach fuses the processes of multiple GOs with expectations states theory. It looks at the encounters, interactions, and exchanges of people in groups to create a sense of difference. The difference then follows the tenets of "a sense of group position" especially with groups developing and promoting their interests based on this difference. The second approach takes a "larger sense of group position" as already established with individuals and smaller groups contextualized in these situations. However, it must be recognized that this "sense of group position" must be accepted by individuals and it is not automatic. People may not be aware of other's warnings of "group position" or don't believe them. Social construction emerges again as each person tests their apparent 'group position,' and if rebuffed by the other group, are more inclined to recognize it. However, this testing does not occur continuously and some people simply accept their "sense of group position," sometimes even when contrary interactions are present.

Using "individual" and "overall" GOs (Dodds et al., 1997), the creation of a larger "sense of group position" or difference would be the movement from a number of specific GOs at work, at school, in the neighborhood, and on the street to a more abstract GO that focuses on strangers categorized into large categories. This "meta-GO" then becomes an overarching marker of difference in social interaction, and it then gets built up into a structural feature of society. With evidence from specific interactions gathered into GOs, the "meta-GO" as "a sense of group position" becomes a guide to behavior where individual interactions are no longer relevant.

Conclusion

Multiple GOs have not been systematically applied in SI analyses of inequality and difference. For instance, an entire issue of *Symbolic Interaction* (Anderson and Snow, 2001) that was devoted to inequality only mentions the "GO" once, and "others evaluations," "othering" and "reflected appraisals" briefly appear. The intent of this paper is to emphasize multiple GOs with ranking processes similar to W. E. B. DuBois concept of dual consciousness. A key to making future SI analyses more specific is to integrate and develop the GO into multiple GOs, which match multiple selves, and show how they develop together. From there, the self's conceptions of difference using multiple GOs can delineate friends from acquaintances to opposing religious, gender, class or racial groups.

Three points about the GO are especially important. First, the re-conceptualized GO is multiple, which leads to multiple selves and provides the basis for socially constructed difference through Blumer's sense of group position. Multiple GOs are socially constructed through framing involving internalization and/or externalization. And finally, GOs most often are ranked in terms of importance to the self. Second, as difference emerges from these ranked GOs, selves form a sense of group position when intersubjective GOs overlap a great deal between people through the intersections of their social constructions. Both "identification" and "valuation" GOs can overlap. Thus, the creation and ranking of multiple GOs demonstrates the social construction of a sense of group position, which seems to be missing in traditional SI accounts. And third, the framing of GOs needs to be more developed. In the three part theory of framing the GO presented here, "selecting" concerns the choice of persons to be in one's various GOs, "shaping" is the ideational content that puts these people together through situations or ideas, and "ranking" looks at how they see some GOs being more important than others. Further research in this area would bring out all three of these processes.

In the continuing effort to refine theories of difference and inequality, this paper has added to SI approach involving the construction of multiple GOs in identifying differences, groups, and categories that are so important for peoples' lives in society. While we are not providing a complete theory of difference, we are emphasizing the construction of a larger theory with the use of multiple and ranked GOs.

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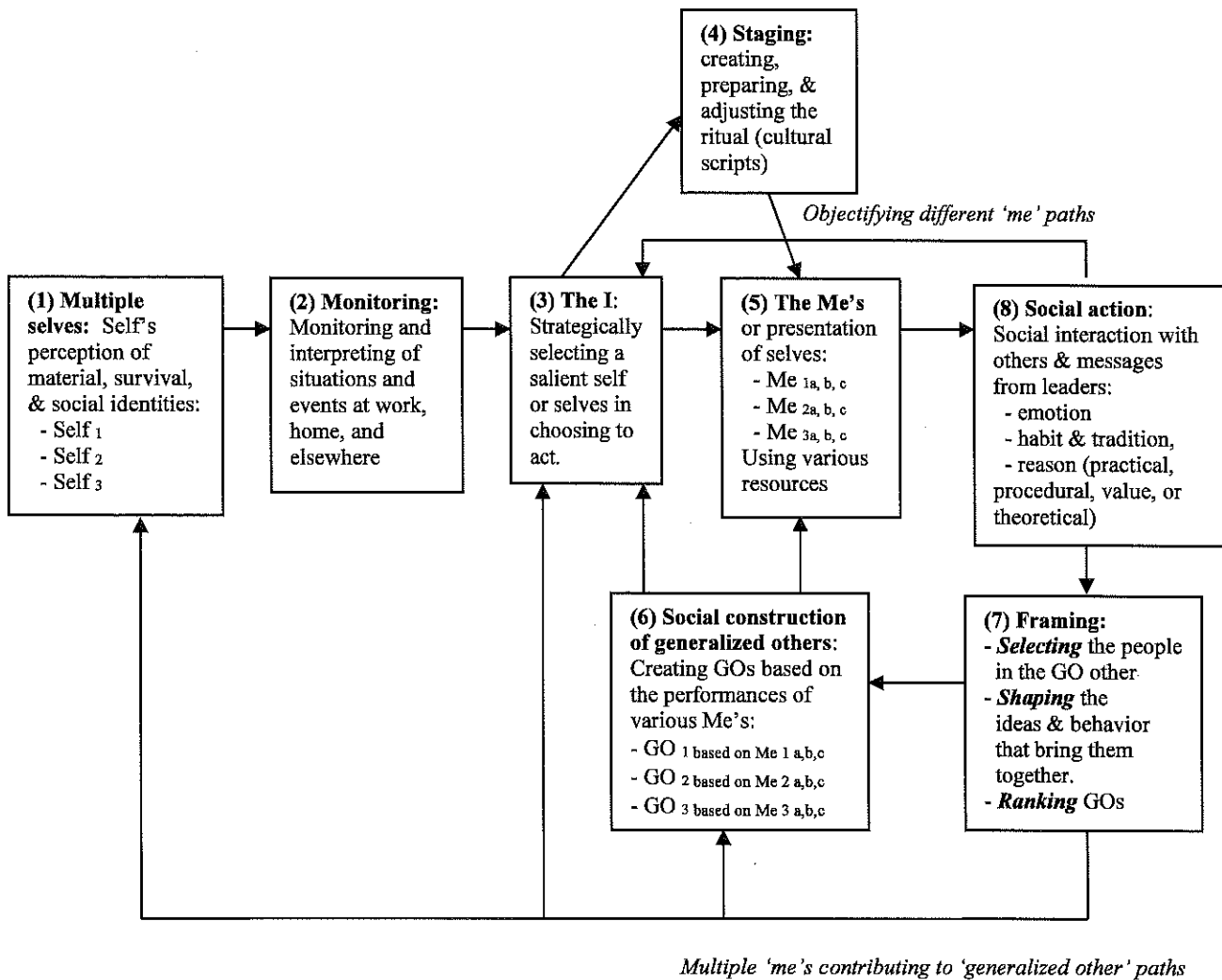**Figure 1: A Model of the Parallel Process of Self Formation and Social Action**

(4) Staging: creating, preparing, & adjusting the ritual (cultural scripts)

Objectifying different 'me' paths

(1) Multiple selves: Self's perception of material, survival, & social identities:
- Self 1
- Self 2
- Self 3

(2) Monitoring: Monitoring and interpreting of situations and events at work, home, and elsewhere

(3) The I: Strategically selecting a salient self or selves in choosing to act.

(5) The Me's or presentation of selves:
- Me 1a, b, c
- Me 2a, b, c
- Me 3a, b, c

Using various resources

(8) Social action: Social interaction with others & messages from leaders:
- emotion
- habit & tradition,
- reason (practical, procedural, value, or theoretical)

(6) Social construction of generalized others: Creating GOs based on the performances of various Me's:
- GO 1 based on Me 1 a,b,c
- GO 2 based on Me 2 a,b,c
- GO 3 based on Me 3 a,b,c

(7) Framing:
- *Selecting* the people in the GO other
- *Shaping* the ideas & behavior that bring them together.
- *Ranking* GOs

Multiple 'me's contributing to 'generalized other' paths

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Table 1: Constructions of Generalized Others (GO) based on Self-Perceptions

	Attributions of inequality to persons of high/low rank	*Externalization toward others due to generalized others*	*Internalization toward one's self due to generalized others*
	1-Merit-based status: Persons of high rank with talent, ability or even entitlement.	*2-Self-justified othering:* Validated rank of GO compared to others with pride, satisfaction, or arrogance.	*3-Powerful virtual selves:* Positive GO based on confidence and positive emotions (with infrequent conversions to the other side with an alternate GO).
High Status	*4-Ascription:* Persons of high rank due to ascription, family or luck.	*5-Defensive othering:* Ambivalence and uneasiness about own rank compared to lower GO.	*6-Defensive internalization:* Positive GO and self based on ambivalent status with some defensive emotions.
	7-Protected status: Persons of high rank due to bias and discrimination against others.	*8-Oppressive othering:* Fear of losing high rank with guilt, anger and rectitude about own and lower GO.	*9-Manipulative internalization:* GO based on active repression of others.
	10-Deferential status: Persons of low rank due to lack of ability or talent (personal or group).	*11-Accepted othering:* Acceptance of imposed and superior GO based on deference & shame.	*12-Creating negative sub-cultures:* Negative GO based on deference and respect for authority, and low self esteem often involving deviance and dropping out.
Low Status	*13-Group Subordination:* Low rank due to fate, ascription, or chance.	*14-Defensive othering:* Acceptance of superior GO but ambivalence and anxiety about imposed GO.	*15-Adaptational othering:* GO and self based on trading power for patronage or forming sub-cultures.
	16-Discrimination: Low rank due to the discrimination and bias of others.	*17-Counter-othering:* Angry rejection of imposed GO and construction of positive alternative GO.	*18-Creating positive sub-cultures:* GO based on active resistance and re-interpretation of ones own group.

Endnotes:

[1] While many scholars read Mead in a number of ways (as they do for any theorist), Mead could have used the GO as a more central part of his theory. Our purpose here is to show how the GO has been de-emphasized in SI (perhaps unintentionally) and how it can be reinforced as a more central concept.

[2] Da Silva (2007: 50-51, 59-61) makes a brief note of multiple generalized others in his introduction to Mead, and Aboulafia (2001, 2010) refers to multiple generalized others. Archer (2012: 96-97) refers to the "internal conversation," which can be interpreted as going on between multiple selves and possibly multiple generalized others in a "relational reflexivity." Gergen (2009:134-150) makes strong references to multi-being and inner dialogues, which are based on a relational being. However, Gergen only makes very brief mention of Mead and Blumer, and does not use the SI terms like the generalized other. While one can find references to multiple GOs in this literature, it is not linked very much to the further study of difference.

[3] From this point on, we use "framing" in a somewhat different way from Goffman. It refers to schemata that is a process that shapes groups or network contacts.

[4] Collins (2004 and elsewhere) makes a persuasive argument that Goffman is Durkheimian rather than an interactionist. However, many SI theorists like Scheff (2006) would disagree. In a paper in preparation, we apply generalized others to further delineate Blumer's concept of race as a sense of group position making major use of Goffman's concepts of front and back stage.

[5] Recent efforts in Europe have been made to bring other theories to SI. Burr (2009) fuses Mead's I and Me, and Bakhtin's "I-for-myself" and "I-for-the-other" (2009:325-6). She also recognizes three levels of the generalized other (people in general, specific groups, and specific others), which is closer to our position (2009:335). However, Burr does not recognize positive, negative, and ranked generalized others. Holdsworth and Morgan (2007) re-emphasize a fluid GO but still view it as singular. Archer (2003, 2010) finds the GO too deterministic and she uses reflexivity along with Bourdieu's *habitus*.

[6] Burke and Stets mention the GO only once (2009:20) and differentiate identities on the basis of "role, group, and person" (2009:114). But their concept of "reflected appraisals" is similar to the GO.

[7] According to Charon (1985: 164), Shibutani calls society a "reference group," takes the GO as a "perspective", uses "several reference groups," and constructs one GO constructed from multiple perspectives.

[8] This table draws on Turner and Stets (2004) and Schwalbe et al. (2000) (especially items 3, 6 and 14). Schwalbe et al.'s (2000) negotiated order perspective is particularly useful, but our use of "other" differs from their definition as "the process whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group" (2000:422) using "oppressive othering, subordinate adaptation, boundary maintenance, and emotional management." Their approach is top-down, while ours is bottom up (2000:421). Hence, Schwalbe and colleagues use more of an externalization approach. To some degree, the contribution of this paper is to complement their approach by adding a more theoretical dimension that specifies the internal mechanisms of the GO and "the me" to make

"othering" a deeper and more complex process that is both external and internal, and active and re-active.

[9] GO processes need to retain a sense of complex interactions in front and back stage. For instance, racial groupings may be strongly influenced by polarizing leaders and in front stage it may be hazardous to express your more complex position based on actual experiences. Backstage and in Blumer's "inner citadel" of intersubjectivity each person involved may have a more complex interaction that they discuss privately and often act upon. For instance, some blacks may have white friends and "act white" according to others who might not. Or whites may similarly be criticized for being an "other lover" (insert hated group for 'other') or "race traitor." Maines' (1999) discussion of information pools for blacks and whites in which the "inner citadel" discussions take place is analogous to our use of generalized others and networks. Further, sanctions that groups may impose from front to back stage in individuals are important. The creation of integrative leaders to counteract polarizing leaders is essential. The Serbian-Bosnian genocide where a seemingly integrated group became very polarized into two warring groups would be fertile ground for seeing how this process might work.