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IN THE PRESENCE OF STRANGERS

A Study of Behavior in Public Settings

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Even to survive for one day,  
the average urban American  
requires a kind of personality  
organization that in many  
societies even the most out-  
standing individual does not  
possess: a capacity to govern  
his own behavior, to make his  
way in a world of strangers,  
to do a job requiring years of  
training in the basic skills of  
literacy, to cope with unexpected  
situations and unfamiliar people.

Kenneth Keniston\*

\* The Uncommitted (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc.,  
1965), p. 368.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Understanding man in his urban environment is a major concern of the social scientific enterprise. Louis Wirth, a sociologist, has suggested that urbanism as a characteristic mode of life might be approached empirically from three interrelated perspectives:

- (1) as a physical structure comprising a population base, a technology, and an ecological order;
- (2) as a system of social organization involving a characteristic social structure, a series of social institutions and a typical pattern of social relationships; and
- (3) as a set of attitudes and ideas, and a constellation of personalities engaging in typical forms of collective behavior and subject to characteristic mechanisms of social control.<sup>1</sup>

While considerable effort has been devoted to systematic exploration within the first and third perspective, the second has been relatively neglected. This study seeks to expand understanding of urbanism as a system of social organization involving a characteristic social structure, a series of social institutions and a typical pattern of social relationships. Within this perspective, it seeks to explore one particular pattern of social relationships: that which obtains among strangers in public settings.<sup>2</sup>

An attempt will be made to gain some understanding of this pattern through an analysis of those techniques

by which modern man is able, in Kenneth Keniston's words, "to make his way in a world of strangers . . . to cope with unexpected situations and unfamiliar people".<sup>3</sup> I will be concerned with some of the ways in which man behaves in public settings in the presence of strangers and I will suggest that some understanding of this behavior may be gained by viewing it as a set of techniques, utilized by man in his attempt to neutralize the dangers of the urban situation.

To suggest that urban man requires special techniques to cope with strangers is to imply a view of the nature of man, of social life and of the urban setting that is not readily explicit. Therefore, before it will be possible to analyze these "coping techniques", it will be necessary to make explicit the postulates upon which this study is based.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Fragile Nature of Man

The concept of anxiety is basic to an understanding of man's curious ways and has come to be central in modern thought. The nature and role of anxiety has been succinctly stated by Ernest Becker.

Anxiety is a prime mover of human behavior, and man will do anything to avoid it . . . . Anxiety pervades the organism when it is completely powerless to overcome a danger. Anxiety is a flood of utter chaos, of annihilating destruction, which the organism has not sufficient resources to oppose. Unlike fear, which the organism rallies to overcome or escape, anxiety permits no rallying. Except in the smallest of doses, it is overwhelming, crushing, obliterating.<sup>5</sup>

In its purest and most primitive form, anxiety is probably shared by all animals, for whom it serves a life preserving function. "Life acknowledges its powerlessness

to cope with certain situations so that in avoiding them it avoids death".<sup>6</sup> For the human infant, in his terrible helplessness, anxiety arises at the threat of abandonment or separation from the succoring adult. It is at this stage of life that man's experience with anxiety probably comes closest to that of other animals. But as the infant grows, the similarities between himself and sub-human animals begin to diminish, for the child learns something, which as far as we know, no other animal has ever learned. He learns the word, "I". He develops a self--a linguistic and symbolic creation--which mediates between the physical environment (including physical needs) and the response of the organism. Instead of the organism being controlled by the stimuli of the physical environment, the self makes possible the control of the stimuli by the organism. This control includes at least partial mastery of that most devastating of stimuli--the primitive anxiety of physical annihilation.

The ego grows by putting anxiety under its control, as it finds out what anxiety is for the organism and then chooses to avoid it by building defenses that handle it. The ego finds out what situations are dangerous and then enables the organism to exist in a world in which there is no danger by steering clear of these situations.<sup>7</sup>

While the "self" is an adaptive device par excellence, providing man with a freedom from the merely physical world, at the same time, the self carries with it a peculiar contingency. Its development gives man

considerable mastery over the anxiety of physical annihilation, but at the same time, a new, perhaps equally devastating anxiety has been introduced--the anxiety of psychical annihilation.

Anxiety, as Paul Tillich has pointed out, is the threat of "nothingness".<sup>8</sup> For the sub-human animal or for the infant, the threat can only be to life; nothingness can be only non-life. But man develops an entity apart from his physical being; a symbolic entity, perhaps, but nonetheless real. It is in this entity, in this social being, the self, not in the body, that man truly resides.<sup>9</sup> Thus, for man, unlike the infant and the sub-human animal, nothingness threatens more than the organism. It threatens the much more fragile self, an object more important than the mere organism. Man is the only animal upon whom destruction can be wrought without the shedding of blood.

But what is this self? What is the nature of the threat of nothingness? How is the self protected against this threat?

It is difficult to capture the nature of the "self" with mere words. (This is the supreme paradox, for words give birth to the self; yet once in existence, the creation eludes its creator.) There can be no self without language, because there can be no self without the pronoun, "I". As language is symbolic communication, so the self

is a symbolic creation. It is a "sense of absolute separateness from the environment".<sup>10</sup> The tools for this sense of separateness are provided by the language of the culture into which the organism is born. The self is the separation of what is "me" from what is not "me". It is the circumscription of the organism in space and in time. "I am here right now". "I will be there, tomorrow". Because it is a sense of separateness from the environment, the self is also the sense of control over the responses which the organism makes to the stimuli from the environment.

To control is to choose and to choose is to impute meaning. To impute meaning is to project action possibilities and to conceive courses of conduct. The linguistic ability which gives the organism a sense of separateness from the environment, also gives it a sense of control by providing meaning. "I am a woman, I am not a man, and what it means to be a woman is different from what it means to be a man." "I am an American, I am not a Russian, and what it means to be an American is different from what it means to be a Russian." "I am in New York, I am not in Little Rock, and what it means to be in New York is different from what it means to be in Little Rock.

The self, then, is a symbolic construction, a linguistic edifice; it is a sense of separateness, of control, and most of all, of meaning.

The importance of meaning cannot be overstated. It is the sine qua non of the self. The self is a creation of symbols and the essence of symbols is meaning and the essence of meaning is the possibility for courses of action.

Thus, the threat of nothingness for the self is the threat of meaninglessness. As Paul Tillich so rightly saw, it is not the anxiety of physical annihilation that poses the real threat to man, but the anxiety of psychical annihilation or meaninglessness.<sup>11</sup> If the symbols, "I", "woman", "American", "New York", "here", "there", "now", "tomorrow", do not mean possibilities for action, then the symbolic self, created out of all these and other symbols, collapses. And this is unbearable, for it is in the self that man resides. Destroy the self and you have destroyed the man, even though the organism may continue to function as a physical being.<sup>12</sup>

But just as the self gains control over the anxiety of physical annihilation, so too it develops a defense against the anxiety of meaningless or psychical annihilation. This defense is a sense of self-esteem. "Self-esteem is the warm inner feeling of self righteousness that arms the individual against anxiety".<sup>13</sup> Self-esteem is the glow of certainty that the world of meaning is intact, that the multitude of symbols forming the self are real. It is, as Becker has said, a feeling of "primary value in a world of meaning".<sup>14</sup>

The necessity for self-esteem introduces the dynamic and processual nature of man. The human animal is an energy-converting organism and as such, must continue action. Indeed, "the fundamental problem of every living organism is simply the continuation of action in the face

of stimuli".<sup>15</sup>

Among sub-human animals and infants, this action in the face of stimuli is relatively direct. Among men it is mediated by the self. Yet whether the response is direct or mediated, whether the stimuli are controlled or uncontrolled, the organism must still act. It is through action that man provides his self with the esteem it requires for continued existence. The culture into which the individual is born provides the "prescription for meaningful action",<sup>16</sup> By acting on the basis of this prescription and by receiving direct and continual confirmation that he has acted "rightly", the human builds and maintains his self-esteem.

But it is at this "feedback" point that we discover the danger inherent in this system. The maintenance of self-esteem and thus the protection of the individual from the anxiety of meaninglessness is dependent upon the responses to the individual of other individuals, each with selves to protect, each with esteem to build. Thus emerges the fundamental uncertainty of social life. What guarantee does the individual have <sup>that</sup> the other's self concern and his own self concern are mutually compatible? There is always the possibility that the next individual he meets will fail to confirm the "rightness" of his actions, will challenge and thus



threaten to destroy his carefully built world of meaning.

The self-system is a delicately fashioned, and, for many, a precariously fragile creation. One doesn't have to be schizophrenic to wonder how most people stand up so well to the outright threats and insidious underminings that take place in social relations. The self-system of many is charged with the explosive potential of massively undermining anxiety.<sup>17</sup>

It is in interaction with others that man must win or lose the struggle for his continued existence as a social being--as an organism with a self.<sup>18</sup>

The self, then, is an extremely fragile creation, a "ritually delicate object", in Erving Goffman's words; and an object which cannot exist outside the world of human interaction; but which, paradoxically, faces possible destruction in that very world. To understand fully the "nature of man", therefore, we must also understand the world in which he struggles for continued existence. We must understand the nature of social life.

#### The Protective Nature of Social Life

If man is to exist as a social being, as an organism with a self, there must be some minimal guarantees that in his interaction with others, he will receive the affirmation and confirmation of himself as "right". And if he is to receive this confirmation there must be some guarantee that the meaning which he assigns to his actions is shared by others. If this meaning is to be dependable, then the behavior of his fellow humans must, at least to

a certain degree, be predictable. The laying out of a predictable world is the "basic function of culture." Within the culture which nurtured and shaped him, the individual

. . . can count on others to behave according to his expectation. The basic personality structure in a culture permits everyone to share a frame of reference in regard to a psychological behavioral world.<sup>19</sup>

While the culture provides a "background of shared meaning" which makes possible a degree of predictability in the behavior of each of its members, it is the task of the society, of social life, to work out the arrangements, the structure and roles and rules which can protect the individual and his fragile self in his day to day interaction with other equally fragile selves.

Within the view of self employed here, there is a sense in which society is a kind of extension of multiple selves, serving primarily as an environmental controlling device and protecting man from the primal anxiety which he seeks to escape.

Drawing upon the comparative analysis of animal behavior, D. O. Hebb and W. R. Thompson have propounded some empirical generalizations that are germane to understanding social life in this way. According to these scholars, there is strong evidence for the proposition that susceptibility to emotional disturbance increases with intellectual development. Man, as the most intelligent of animals, is thus the most susceptible.

Yet man, seemingly, is among the least disturbable of animals. Human society, itself, however, may be exactly the device that allows man to avoid too-strong emotional disturbance. While human society is surely a means of obtaining control over the physical environment, it may also be the means by which man avoids excessive emotional disturbance through control of the behavior of other men.<sup>20</sup>

Social life is organized so as to provide man with the kind of supports and confirmation of his adequacy, worth and legitimacy from his fellow man that he requires for the maintenance of his fragile self.

The following, rather long passage from Ernest Becker, makes this point with great clarity.

A society, basically, is a practical system of interaction set up to exploit the environment so that its members can survive. Usually we conceive of this social organization as a rather routine arrangement. The institutions of society are conventions which the members follow so that the work can be done; that is, bricklayers know how to lay bricks and how to act on the job and at the union hall. But this picture is much too deceptively course; it obscures the crucial underlying dynamic. In more subtle focus, the fundamental task that every society on earth must face is truly monumental. Society must protect its person-objects at their sorest point; the fragile self-esteem of each and every member. In the social encounter, each member exposes for public scrutiny and possible intolerable undermining, the one thing he needs most; the positive self-valuation 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>21</sup>

It is precisely because there can be "nothing routine about social life" that such men as Erving Goffman have been concerned with spelling out in great

detail, the ritual elements of social interaction.

It is therefore important to see that the self is in part a ceremonial thing, a sacred object which must be treated with proper ritual care and in turn must be presented in a proper light to others. As a means through which this self is established, the individual acts with proper demeanor while in contact with others and is treated by others with deference. . . . The environment must ensure that the individual will not pay too high a price for acting with good demeanor and that deference will be accorded him. Deference and demeanor practices must be institutionalized so that the individual will be able to project a viable, sacred self and stay in the game on a proper ritual basis.<sup>22</sup>

It is because the maintenance of self is such an overriding concern in social life that social life can be viewed as a bargain, a whispered enjoiner: "Let us all protect each other so that we can carry on the business of living".<sup>23</sup>

It is a fundamental task of society to socialize its "person-objects" in such a way that they will be willing to abide by the ground rules of this bargain. The society must teach them to revere themselves as "ritually-delicate objects" so that they will be sufficiently concerned with their own protection to extend that protection to others.

A person's performance of face-work extended by his tacit agreement to help others perform theirs, represents his willingness to abide by the ground rules of social interaction. Here is the hallmark of his socialization as an interactant. If he and the others were not socialized this way, interaction in most societies and most situations would be a much more hazardous thing for feelings and faces. The person would find it impractical to be oriented to symbolically conveyed appraisals of social worth, or to be possessed of feelings; that is, it would be impractical for him to be a ritually delicate object. And as I shall suggest, if the person were not a ritually delicate object, occasions of talk would not be organized in the way they usually are.<sup>24</sup>

The failure of one interactant to hold up his part in the social ritual casts doubt upon the entire performance. To doubt the performance is to chip away at the shared meaning which underlies it and thus to expose all participants to that anxiety which they are working so hard to avoid. Responses to glimpses of anxiety might include alienation,<sup>25</sup> embarrassment,<sup>26</sup> or, perhaps, shame.<sup>27</sup>

For an animal trained as a performer, failure to uphold one's part in the plot is deeply wounding. To bungle the performance, to show oneself hopelessly inept, is to lose face and jeopardize the face of others. To lose face is to strike at one's fragile self-esteem, to open oneself to the core of anxiety proneness.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the demand that social life makes on the individual is two-fold: he must project himself in such a way as to appear competent and in relative control of himself and his surroundings, and he must do all he can to assist others in their attempts to appear the same way. These two aspects of the social demand are highly interrelated. By maintaining himself as a competent actor, the individual protects both himself and others from possible shame and embarrassment at his performance; by assisting others to appear as competent actors, he protects both them and himself from possible shame and embarrassment at their performance.<sup>29</sup>

\* \* \*

I have attempted to spell out, however briefly, the postulates about the nature of man and of social life which underlie the following analysis of man's behavior in

public settings. That analysis requires further, an understanding of the unique and peculiar characteristics of social life under the conditions of urbanism.

### The Dangerous Nature of the Urban Setting

The foregoing characterization of man as fragile and social life as protective contains two implicit assertions about the conditions of social life under which man's self and self esteem can be successfully protected and sustained. These are:

- (1) that the individuals who interact in social life all share a similar cultural background and all adhere to and have a stake in the rules of interaction laid down by their society; and
- (2) that the individuals who interact in social life all know one another, at least to the extent that they are cognizant of each other's roles and statuses and can thus respond to each other in the proscribed manner.

As is readily evident, these two pre-requisites for an anxiety free social life simply do not exist for large numbers of urban inhabitants during large segments of their typical day. The city, as it is commonly defined, is a permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals, a settlement which <sup>is</sup> both relatively large and densely populated.<sup>30</sup> As a socially heterogeneous unit, the city contains persons from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and traditions. Far from being surrounded by persons who share his culture and have a stake in preserving his system of meaning, the urbanite is instead, living in a world peopled by many strange and alien others. In addition, as Robert Park has suggested, the city, by its very nature, offers opportunities for the exceptional

and abnormal types of man.

. . . a great city tends to spread out and lay bare to the public view in a massive manner all the human characters and traits which are ordinarily obscured and suppressed in smaller communities. The city, in short, shows the good and evil in human nature in excess.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the urban dweller is surrounded not only by persons of different cultural traditions, but by unconventional types from his own culture as well.

As a settlement which is both large and densely populated, the city precludes any possibility that all, or even large numbers of, its inhabitants will know one another. Louis Wirth has noted that the

increase in the number of inhabitants of a community beyond a few hundred is bound to limit the possibility of each member of the community knowing all the others personally. Max Weber, in recognizing the social significance of this fact, explained that from a sociological point of view large numbers of inhabitants and density of settlement means a lack of that mutual acquaintanceship which ordinarily inheres between inhabitants in a neighborhood. The increase in numbers thus involves a changed character of social relationships.<sup>32</sup>

Or, more simply, in the words of Jane Jacobs:

Cities differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers.<sup>33</sup>

That is, on city sidewalks and parks, in busses and subways, in restaurants and bars and libraries and elevators, in depots and terminals, urban man is surrounded by persons whom he does not know and with whom his only relationship is that he and they happen to occupy the same territory at the same time.

By its very nature, then, the urban setting--heterogeneous in composition, dense in settlement and large in size--fails to provide, for those who dwell within it, the requisite conditions for anxiety-free social life. It is in this sense, that it may be said to be dangerous.

Given man's need for continual support and self-confirmation from others, let us examine a number of specific ways in which the city makes problematic the fulfillment of this need.

First, surrounded as he is by persons whom he does not know personally, and in fact may never have seen before, the urban dweller is unable to anticipate and thus be prepared for and protected against any inappropriate conduct on the part of others. While in a small town or village, those individuals whose inadequate selves threaten the social ceremonial may be quickly labeled, easily recognized and routinely anticipated, the city allows for no such protective arrangements. The urbanite knows nothing personally of the man sitting next to him in the bus depot or walking ahead of him on the street, and he has no way of anticipating whether the stranger's actions may suddenly appear inappropriate. Should the stranger begin to undress or direct loud and insulting remarks toward him, the urbanite, lacking any preparation for such behavior, will be unable to proffer an appropriate response. Whatever damage the stranger's behavior causes to the social ceremonial, will go unrepaired. And by his failure to provide an appropriate response, the urbanite will have demonstrated to all others about him, his inadequacy as a social participant. His



self-esteem will be damaged, his self, threatened.

Second, the urbanite must make judgments about those around him, judgments which will guide his actions and will determine whether hisself is supported, on the basis of very little concrete information. That is, he is dependant for cues as to how he ought to behave toward the strangers about him almost entirely upon information gleaned through sight. Georg Simmel took note of this strange arrangement as early as 1908.

Social life in the large city as compared to the towns shows a great preponderance of occasions to see rather than hear people. Before the appearance of omnibuses, railroads, and street cars in the nineteenth century, men were not in a situation where for periods of minutes or hours they could or must look at each other without talking to one another. Modern social life increases in ever growing degree the role of mere visual impression which always characterizes the preponderant part of all sense relationships between man and man and must place social attitudes and feelings upon an entirely changed basis.<sup>34</sup>

Should the judgments based on visual impressions prove incorrect, the urbanite will behave inappropriately, and again, his self-esteem will be damaged, his self, threatened.

Third, in the same way that the urbanite is dependant on visual cues to guide him in his behavior toward others, others are also dependant upon visual cues to guide them in their behavior toward him. If his self is to be confirmed, he must convey clearly and without recourse to verbal communication, just what kind of person he really is. If there are to be no mis-understandings, his "performance" must be flawless.

Robert Park, in discussing the self-consciousness which man so frequently feels in the presence of strangers,

suggests that this may be due to

. . . the fear that we will not make a good impression; the fear that we are not looking our best; that we shall not be able to live up to our conception of ourselves, and particularly, that we shall not be able to live up to the conception which we should like other persons to have of us.<sup>35</sup>

And Erving Goffman points out that when he is among strangers, man has good reason to be concerned.

The more information the audience has about the performer, the less likely it is that anything they learn during the interaction will radically influence them. On the other hand, where no prior information is possessed, it may be expected that the information gleaned during the interaction will be relatively crucial. Hence, on the whole, we may expect individuals to relax the strict maintenance of front when they are with those they have known for a long time, and to tighten their front when among persons who are new to them. With those whom one does not know, careful performances are required.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, all of the above difficulties are compounded by the fact that the urban dweller has no guarantee that the strangers who surround him even share his system of meaning. Even . . . if he should respond appropriately to disrupting behavior, there may be those about who will not understand that he has done so. Even if his judgments of others are sound, his actions based on these judgments may be seen by others as incorrect. Even if his performance is flawless, there may be those who will mis-interpret. For what is appropriate, sound and flawless within one system of meaning, is not necessarily so within another system.<sup>37</sup>

\* \* \*

The dangerous nature of the urban setting should by now be evident. Yet the fact remains that men continue to live, work and play in the great urban centers, without any indication of wholesale psychical annihilation as the result. Perhaps this is not surprising. Robert Park early observed that people who live together, even on the most casual of terms, will eventually acquire some accepted forms of intercourse, etiquette, manners and social ritual.<sup>38</sup> It thus is reasonable to assume that with the growth of urbanism, certain conventions which guide the relationships between strangers have developed; conventions whose primary purpose is to reduce as much as possible the peril inherent in such relationships.

As I initially stated, the intent of this study is to seek some understanding of the pattern of relationships among strangers in the urban setting. To do this, one must try to understand the conventions which guide them. Yet the exact nature of these conventions is illusive; one cannot directly observe conventions, one can only observe the way in which they work themselves out in actual behavior. Thus, the focus here is on behavior; on the way men behave in public settings in the presence of strangers. And the underlying assumption is that this behavior can best be understood if analyzed as a set of techniques which represent the "working out" of the underlying conventions. By gaining some understanding of these techniques, we may begin to glimpse the conventions which guide them.<sup>39</sup>

In the pages which follow, then, we shall be watching man as he goes about his task of making the urban world safe for his fragile self. We shall view this world as a kind of battleground, in which he is primarily concerned with projecting a correct image of self so as to defend this self against any attack by alien enemies. I will classify these protective measures into 1) strategies of personal defense in public settings, or man's overall plans for engaging the enemy; and 2) tactics of personal defense in public settings, or man's techniques for maneuvering in the face of the enemy. And I shall always be on the lookout for clues as to the conventions or rules by which this battle is being waged.

A final point. The individual entering the public battleground must be simultaneously concerned with both offensive and defensive techniques. That is, he must present himself in such a way that the self he wishes to project is confirmed (offensive) and at the same time, he must avoid situations or persons which might lead to disconfirmation (defensive). My analysis will assume that all techniques, whether strategic or tactical, serve this combined offensive-defensive function. If he is to be successful in projecting a desired and confirmable self, then he must also be successful in avoiding disconfirming incidents. And if he is to successfully avoid disconfirming incidents, he must project a desired and confirmable self.

## CHAPTER I NOTES

1. Wirth, Louis, "Urbanism As a Way of Life", in Albert J. Reiss, Jr., ed., Louis Wirth On Cities and Social Life (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 78.

2. However, as Wirth has noted, the perspectives from which urban life may be viewed, are interrelated. An understanding of relationships among strangers will, therefore, require that the ecological and social psychological aspects of urbanism be touched upon as well. It is interesting that present day urban sociology concerns itself almost exclusively with the first of Wirth's three suggested perspectives. Arnold Rose has pointed out that "the term 'Chicago tradition' in sociology is sometimes used to refer to approaches to the fields of human ecology and urban sociology developed by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess . . . . It is a datum of interest to the sociologist of knowledge that only those who had little or no direct contact with the University of Chicago's department think of it as being primarily associated with ecological theory and research. Actually the Chicago sociologists always regarded ecology as a minor sub-field of sociology". Human Behavior and Social Process (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. viii.

3. Keniston, Kenneth, The Uncommitted (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 368.

4. For a discussion of the methodology employed in this study, see the appendix.

5. Becker, Ernest, The Birth and Death of Meaning (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1962), pp. 39-40. Both this section on the fragile nature of man and the next on the protective nature of social life, draw extensively upon the writings of Ernest Becker. In addition to the work cited above, see The Revolution in Psychiatry (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1964).
6. Ibid., p. 40.
7. Ibid., p. 42.
8. Tillich, Paul, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 37.
9. Man's historical concern with "life after death", with the "immortality of the soul" may be considered as evidence for this affirmation. Note also that such a phrase as "to get him where he really lives" has nothing to do with physical destruction.
10. Becker, op. cit., p. 26.
11. Tillich, op. cit., p. 37. Tillich understood that in a world of conflicting meanings, all meaning systems can come to be seen as arbitrary. It seems likely that this type of anxiety is a far more serious threat to modern man, living in a world of rapid transportation and mass communication, than it was to his more culturally insulated ancestors.
12. Thus, it is possible for man to speak of a "fate worse than death", or "a living death". It may be also that suicide is only possible because there can be this psychical destruction of a still living organism.

13. Becker, op. cit., p. 79.
14. Ibid., p. 85.
15. Ibid., p. 38.
16. Ibid., p. 85.
17. Ibid., p. 93. Some evidence of the need for continual and direct confirmation from others can be seen in the experiences of individuals, such as castaway sailors, who exist for a time in complete isolation from other human beings. For a particularly graphic description of such an experience see Byrd, Admiral Richard, Alone (New York: Fieldcrest Publishing Co., Inc., 1966).
18. It is in this context, I would suggest, that we can begin to understand the importance of Erving Goffman's work. Recognizing the fragile nature of man, Goffman is concerned with spelling out the rules and regularities of social life which support, and make possible man's continued existence. This is particularly clear in his essays dealing with face to face interaction in the encounter. See, for example, "On Face Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction", Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes, Vol. XVIII (August, 1955), 213-231; "Embarrassment and Social Organization", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. LXII ( ), 264-271; "Alienation From Interaction", Human Relations, Vol X ( ), 47-60; "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor", American Anthropologist, Vol. LVIII, (June, 1956), 473-502, and Encounters (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1961).

19. Becker, op. cit., p. 85.
20. Hebb, D. O. and Thompson, W. R., "The Social Significance of Animal Studies" in Gardner Lindzey, ed., Handbook of Social Psychology, Vol. I (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 532-558.
21. Becker, op. cit., p. 94.
22. Goffman, Erving, "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor", op. cit., p. 497.
23. Becker, op. cit., p. 99.
24. Goffman, Erving, "On Face Work", op. cit., pp. 224-225.
25. Goffman, Erving, "Alienation From Interaction", op. cit., p. 59.

When an incident occurs and spontaneous involvement is threatened, then reality is threatened. Unless the disturbance is checked, unless the interactants regain their proper involvement, the illusion of reality will be shattered, the minute social system that is brought into being with each encounter will be disorganized, and the participants will feel unruly, unreal and anomic.

26. Goffman, "Embarrassment and Social Organization", op. cit.
27. Becker, op. cit., p. 125.
28. Ibid.
29. Both Becker and Goffman have pointed out that those persons we term "mentally ill" are the ones who have failed to uphold their parts in the social bargain. As Becker notes, "He [the mentally ill person] engages us when we have the right to be separate, by, say, putting his hands on us at inopportune times or complimenting us into embarrassment when we choose to remain unnoticed. He unnerves us by being indifferent to everything he should cherish; or he may play so shadowy and unconvincing a part that our own action bogs down into indecision". [op. cit., p. 123.]
- It might be further suggested that what we term intox-



ication is a state of glowing well-being and sense of inviolable self, with a concomitant lowering of anxiety threshold, such that the individual no longer feels a need to uphold the rules of the social bargain. Persons in such a state, it will be noted, are notoriously immune to external sanctions and internal shame. On the other hand, by labelling persons in this state as "intoxicated", by incorporating instances of this behavior into our normal expectations, and by rigidly regulating when such behavior may occur, we are protected from what might otherwise be extremely threatening lapses in adherence to the social bargain. As Ray Birdwhistell has pointed out: "We can bear inappropriate behavior only if we can anticipate its inappropriateness. Undiagnosed unpredictability in others leaves us with doubt about ourselves". ["The Frames in The Communication Process", unpublished paper given to The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, Annual Scientific Assembly, October 10, 1959.]

30. See, for example, Louis Wirth's characterization of the city in "Urbanism As a Way of Life", op. cit., p. 66.

31. "The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment", Human Communities (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1952), p. 51.

32. Wirth, Louis, op. cit., p. 70.

33. Jacobs, Jane, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 30.

34. Simmel, Georg, "Sociology of the Senses: Visual Interaction", in Robert W. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, eds., Introduction To The Science of Sociology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 360.
35. Park, Robert, "The Urban Community As a Spatial Pattern and a Moral Order", Human Communities, op. cit., p. 176.
36. Goffman, Erving, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 222.
37. It should be pointed out that the responses to his action which the individual receives from those around him and which serve to confirm or disconfirm his self, may be actual or imagined. That is, others may indicate their response through visible gestures, facial expressions or even verbal comments. However, much of the time, there will be no such visible signs. Confirmation or disconfirmation will result, rather, from the individual's internalized conception of the likely responses of others. Such internalized conceptions are, of course, part of his cultural tradition and are reliable only for his perceptions of like others. But since he has very little information on which to determine who is the "soul-mate" and who the "alien", he must rely on these internalized conceptions for feedback whenever visible responses are not forthcoming. In many cases, he may be wrong. But the actual responses

of others are irrelevant; it is only his perception of these responses which is important.

38. Park, Robert, "Sociology, Community and Society" from Wilson Gee, ed., Research in the Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), pp. 3-49.

39. Erving Goffman's Behavior in Public Places (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), is the single available work primarily concerned with the sociology of urban public settings. Although the approach of Goffman's book is quite different from the one to be utilized here, it will be drawn upon whenever relevant.

**PART ONE: STRATEGIES OF PERSONAL DEFENSE  
IN PUBLIC SETTINGS**

CHAPTER II  
INTELLIGENCE

In military parlance, the term strategy includes intelligence, or information secured prior to actual engagement of the enemy and utilized in the formation of both strategic and tactical decisions; and strategic decisions, or matters such as location of battle, deployment of troops, materiel, size of force, etc. This chapter is concerned with the first element, intelligence. Chapter III will focus on selected strategic decisions.

\* \* \*

Intelligence may be composed of information covering a myriad of topics but the discussion here is limited to information of only three types: 1) information regarding the means of warfare, or coping techniques; 2) information regarding the battle site, or public settings; and 3) information regarding the enemy, or persons in public settings. At the conclusion of this chapter, I shall briefly discuss the general problem--inherent in all warfare--of incorrect intelligence or mis-information.

It must be kept in mind that the focus here is on information available to the individual prior to any given instance of an entrance into a public setting. Information which he possess because of having been in a particular setting before is not precluded. Intelligence includes all information obtained prior to any given

entrance, regardless of the source of that information.

### TYPES OF INTELLIGENCE

#### Information About Coping Techniques

Whether for the general commanding an entire army, or for the individual directing only himself, it is absolutely essential that intelligence include information regarding the means of warfare, or in the case of urban man, regarding coping techniques. The fact that urban settings, despite their dangers, have not been the scenes of wholesale psychical annihilation, suggests that urban man possesses such information. Yet, interestingly enough, there was little or nothing in man's past history of social experience to have equipped him with these techniques. To fully appreciate the fact that modern man is skilled at coping with the dangers of urbanism, it is necessary to understand that he gained these skills only yesterday.

The urban setting as we know it today is a relatively recent development in the long history of man. While the "city" as a social unit extends back into antiquity, it is only in the last several hundred years that cities have come to possess those characteristics by which we now identify them: large in numbers, dense in settlement, and heterogeneous in population. To modern man, accustomed to New York, or Paris or London, the great cities of history would appear like small towns.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, even within the United States, one of the most urbanized of countries, the numbers of people who experienced the urban setting represented, until very recently, a miniscule proportion of the population.<sup>2</sup>

Thus it is that the sudden and rapid development of urbanism found man with little in his back-log of experience of social life to prepare him for the dangers of the modern city. Centuries of living in small towns and villages, surrounded by others much like himself, left him ill-equipped to live in a world in which strangers were not the exception, but the rule; in which heterogeneity was not unusual, but commonplace. If man was to survive in such a world, arrangements must be made to neutralize its dangers.

Such arrangements were made. There are two concurrent and interrelated developments in the history of urbanism which may be viewed as having been primarily responsible for the neutralization of urban dangers. The first is, of course, our main concern here: the development of a set of coping techniques and the conventions which underlie them. The second, although not of primary interest, deserves some mention. This is the development of the "policed society".

In a fascinating paper, "On the Demand for Order in Civil Society", Allan Silver has pointed out that the modern police organization, goes back only to the middle of the nineteenth century. Prior to that time, police functions were handled by "ordinary, respectable citizens", or, for purposes of internal peace-keeping, by the military. With increasing concentration of large

populations in small areas, neither proved very efficient. But with the creation of the police, it became possible to exercise

potentially violent supervision over the population by bureaucratic means widely diffused throughout civil society in small and discretionary operations that [were] capable of rapid concentration.<sup>3</sup>

What this meant in terms of reduction of physical violence has often been noted. But there is another side to the coin, one that is of more relevance here. The establishment of a police organization meant that public areas, those sites of maximum contact between strangers, were being patrolled by officials whose sole function was to see that order was maintained. Their very presence suggested that certain standards of behavior were expected and that deviations would be swiftly punished. In other words, the police organization made possible a degree of predictability in the behavior of one stranger to another. And, as was stressed earlier, predictability of the behavior of others is one of the keystones of anxiety-free social life.

However, the development of the police organization, without a concomitant development of coping techniques and the conventions which underlie them, would have done little more than neutralize the physical dangers of urban settings. Without this second development, the psychical dangers would have remained. This is true for two reasons.



First, without the establishment of some set of conventions as to what is to be allowed in the relations between strangers, the police function would have been limited to the prevention of physical violence. These conventions, of course, differ from culture to culture; and one gets a very strong sense of the extent to which the laws of this country are concerned with the protection of its citizens' fragile selves by visiting a country in which the conventions differ. In certain sections of Mexico, for example, the American finds himself unprotected from his conception of psychical assault. He is approached by beggars--the lame, the halt and the blind--and forced to undergo face to face confrontation with them.<sup>4</sup> The offer of a prostitute may be loudly tendered on a public street, conveying to whomever may be about (including his wife) that he is the sort of person who might utilize the services of such women. An American woman may be subjected to "offers" and "suggestions", also loudly tendered, challenging to the very core, her conception of herself as a "decent", "respectable" person. In contrast, in most sections of most American cities, any such assaults could be readily met by summoning the police.<sup>5</sup> (In those sections where such "assaults" are allowed, it is generally understood that anyone entering the section does so deliberately and is in fact possessed of the motivations or character being imputed to him.)

Second, as Jane Jacobs has noted:

. . . the public peace--the sidewalk and street peace--of cities is not kept primarily by police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Without the development and internalization of these conventions, without widespread knowledge and use of the coping techniques which express them, there would simply be insufficient numbers of police available to provide even minimal protection from urban dangers. But in combination, these two developments have done much to remove the peril from urban settings and to render great cities inhabitable.

As Jane Jacobs suggests in the statements just cited, the network of voluntary controls and standards which contribute so much to public order are unconscious, or, more precisely, out-of-awareness. Recent as they may be, the coping techniques and conventions which underlie them have already passed into what Edward T. Hall has called, the "informal aspects of culture."

Entire systems of behavior made up of hundreds of thousands of details are passed from generation to generation and nobody can give the rules for what is happening. Only when these rules are broken do we realize they exist.

Modern man knows how to protect himself in public settings, knows how to behave in such a way as to minimize the dangers of those settings, but is often scarcely aware that he possesses this knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Since the urban setting presented man with problems for which his previous experience in social life provided no ready solutions, it is to be expected that knowledge of techniques and conventions which arose to cope with these problems must initially have been quite explicit. There is some indication that this is the case. A casual purview of etiquette books from 1881 to the present reveals an initial concentration on explicit instructions for public behavior, followed by a gradually decreasing concern.

Published in 1881, a little book entitled, Our Deportment, or "The Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined Society," contains four chapters devoted to such instructions: Chapter XII, "Etiquette of the Street"; Chapter XIII, "Etiquette of Public Places,"; Chapter XIV, "Etiquette of Traveling"; and Chapter XXIII, "General Rules of Conduct". The reader of these chapters was provided with such explicit admonitions as:

No gentleman is ever guilty of the offense of standing on street corners and the steps of hotels or other public places and boldly scrutinizing every lady who passes.<sup>9</sup>

Never speak to your acquaintances from one side of the street to the other. Shouting is a certain sign of vulgarity. First approach, and then make your communication to your acquaintance or friend in a moderately loud tone of voice.<sup>10</sup>

Never turn a corner at full speed or you may find yourself knocked down, or may knock down another, by the violent contact. Always look in the way you are going or you may chance to meet some awkward collision.<sup>11</sup>

By 1892, such single-minded concern with public behavior had abated somewhat. A section of The House-keeper's Helper, entitled "Polite Deportment", devoted only about seven paragraphs to instructing its readers in the intricate manners of public places. However, what instructions it did provide were no less explicit than those of its predecessor's.

Should you tread upon or stumble against any one, do not fail to make immediate apology. Of course, you will not stare at nor point to people, nor carry umbrella or cane horizontally under your arm.<sup>12</sup>

Standard Etiquette, published in 1925, contains a general discussion of proper behavior in travelling and business but limits its explicit instructions to two pages of brief don'ts:

Don't talk in a loud voice or act in an eccentric manner, both make one conspicuous.

Don't appear to notice blunders in service when others are around.

Don't give exhibitions of anger, fear, hatred, embarrassment, ardor or undue hilarity in public-- it is embarrassing for others and in bad taste.<sup>13</sup>

By the 1940's, etiquette books were suggesting little more than that the individual in a public setting should make himself as inconspicuous as possible.

Do nothing in company that calls attentions to the body or its functions.<sup>14</sup>

Inconspicuousness is the keynote to well-bred behavior in public.<sup>15</sup>

Go your way quietly, taking your place in the crowd unobtrusively, attracting no attention to yourself.<sup>16</sup>

Conduct yourself quietly and unobtrusively. Do not attract attention to yourself and a companion by talking loudly, laughing uproariously, whistling, singing or humming.<sup>17</sup>

And the 1962 edition of Amy Vanderbilt's New Complete Book of Etiquette contains not a single reference to proper behavior in public settings.<sup>18</sup>

In less than a hundred years, urban Americans have acquired an intimate knowledge of the techniques by which to render their social environment less perilous. The American woman, for example, "knows in her bones" how to minimize the dangers to her self in a public setting. Her conduct is guided by a knowledge of techniques so intimate as to be second nature. She has no need of these explicit instructions provided for her grandmother in 1881:

The true lady walks the street, wrapped in a mantle of proper reserve, so impenetrable that insult and coarse familiarity shrink from her, while she, at the same time, carries with her a congenial atmosphere which attracts all, and puts all at their ease.

A lady walks quietly through the streets, seeing and hearing nothing that she ought not to see and hear, recognizing acquaintances with a courteous bow, and friends with words of greetings. She is always unobtrusive, never talks loudly or laughs boisterously, or does anything to attract the attention of the passers-by. She walks along in her own quiet, lady like way, and by her pre-occupation is secure from any annoyance to which a person of less perfect breeding might be subjected.<sup>19</sup> [Italics added]

### Information About Public Settings

The intelligence available to the modern urban American is not limited to knowledge regarding the means of warfare, or coping techniques; he also possesses considerable information regarding the battle site itself, the public setting. This information may be of two types: general, or knowledge gained through experience of similar settings or through receipt of information about a given or similar setting from others; and special, or knowledge gained through having experienced a given setting on a previous occasion. Based on the intricacy and detailed character of the information, special knowledge may be sub-divided into three types: casual, familiar and intimate.

As has been repeatedly pointed out, anxiety free social life depends in large measure on predictability. The function of intelligence is to provide the individual with some idea of legitimate expectations. Thus, the more detailed his knowledge of any given public setting, the greater his ability to anticipate what may occur in that setting and the lesser the threat from the unexpected. Special knowledge, then, provides greater protection than does general; and, as we shall see, intimate special knowledge provides the greatest protection of all.

General Information. General information, gained through experience of or hearsay about a type of setting, is available to all members of a society merely as a result of having been born into and raised in that society.

One aspect of the socialization of the child involves providing him with just this kind of information. He learns that the grocery store is a place to shop, not sleep; that playgrounds are places to play, not to eliminate waste materials; that libraries are places to read, not to exercise.

The acquisition of general information about public settings is never-ending, and for modern urban man, involves an extremely complex and intricate set of distinctions. He learns that bars are places where one goes to drink and/or to meet friends, but he also learns that certain bars are places where homosexuals go to drink and/or to meet friends. He knows that certain sections of the city are devoted to legitimate business and recreation, but he also knows that certain sections are devoted to less than legitimate pursuits. He may read The New York Times Magazine and discover that certain bars in large urban centers have become "social clubs", neutral meeting grounds for young, unattached males and females. And, if he reads closely, he will even learn the names and locations of such bars: "Fridays", on New York's upper east side; "The Store", in Chicago's near north section; "The Camelot" in San Francisco's Pacific Heights.<sup>20</sup> Persons who enter a public setting possessed only of general information may

be said to be newcomers.

Information of this sort is essential if the urban American is to wend his way without harm through the complexities of his environment. Such information tells him not only what given public settings are used for, but also what types of persons might be expected to be there, and at what time of day. Thus, a school boy playing hooky is ill advised to appear at the ticket window of a theater. On the other hand, his presence in a bus depot is likely to arouse no notice; it is assumed that he is not in school for the very legitimate reason that he is travelling. Knowledge about the differences between libraries and bars, for example, is requisite for unaccompanied females wishing to avoid any affronts to "respectability". Libraries, interestingly enough, are one of the few public places in our society where a lone woman may linger indefinitely without risk that her presence may be misconstrued. Bars, in contrast, are sites of maximum danger. Females without males, even if in a group of <sup>several</sup> other females, who are present in such locales, particularly after 6 p.m. are usually viewed as having entered for less than respectable purposes.<sup>21</sup>

General information about public settings can also be mis-used. That is, such information can provide some assurance, that within limits, certain settings may be utilized for purposes other than those for which they are intended or may be used at a time other than that which is considered legitimate. General information about



public settings, for example, can provide a sociological observer with the certainty that bus depots and terminals can be used, not to wait for transportation, but to observe public behavior. Likewise, certain pensioners and skid row males utilize court rooms as places to be both warmed and entertained because they know that such locales are open to all who wish to come and are willing to refrain from any interference with the proceedings. However, as we shall see below, extensive mis-use of public settings, if it is to be free of risk, requires information about such settings that is far more detailed and intricate than general information.

Intelligence based on general information about public settings, despite its usefulness, has some serious drawbacks. It is always subject to the very real possibility that it may be incorrect. The implications of this contingency for the safety of urban man will be discussed in some detail at the end of this chapter. But let us now consider a type of information, which is far more reliable as a basis upon which urban man may design his strategy and guide his tactics.

Special Information. In contrast with general information, special information is considerably more detailed and intimate and much more likely to be correct, based as it is on actual experience of a given setting at a previous point in time. As such,

the individual possessed of special information is less likely to face any threat to self from unexpected occurrences than is he who must rely on general information only. Nevertheless, such protection may vary considerably, depending upon the degree to which the information is complete. We may distinguish three sub-types of special information, ranging from that in which the information is <sup>a</sup> least complete and offers the least protection, to that in which it is most complete and offers the greatest protection. We may also distinguish three types of possessors of special information, each corresponding to the particular type of information held.

The least complete of the three sub-types, casual information, is in the possession of the customer. The customer gains his information through short-term usage of the setting on intermittent, infrequent occasions.

The information itself is limited to a general conception of the physical layout of the setting, including the types and sites of available facilities. Thus, the housewife on a downtown shopping trip, not only knows that the nearby bus depot contains a coffee shop, she also knows its exact location within the depot. Such information can do much to assist the individual, as we shall see, both strategically, in deciding whether or not to enter the setting, and tactically, in dealing with the problem of self management.

The customer is extremely unlikely to know anyone in the setting. He may recognize a long-term employee, but he will not know that person's name, nor will he

and the employee have established the minimal relationship requisite for an exchange of pleasantries.

Casual information provides some potential for risk-free setting mis-use, although not a great deal more than does general information. The only real advantage of casual over general information is that the former includes exact data about the facilities available in the setting. Having positive knowledge that the nearby bus depot provides a restroom for the convenience of customers and knowing exactly where it is located, can be a great advantage to a shopper, suddenly struck with an urgent call from nature. Or, possessing the information that the same depot contains a photo machine as an "entertainment" for its customers, greatly simplifies the task of a teenage couple seeking a site in which to have their pictures taken at minimal expense. The mis-use in these instances lies in the fact that while the information was gained at a time when the individual was a customer and thus had legitimate access to the facilities, such information led to the use of the facilities at a time when the individual was not a customer and did not have legitimate access.

Since any individual may be a customer of and possess casual information about a relatively large number of public settings, he is able to mis-use, to a limited extent, an equally large number of such settings. Mis-use of the facilities of public settings, particularly rest rooms, is thus quite common. One has only to station oneself for a prolonged period of time in such a setting

to observe troops of lady shoppers, business men, children and teenagers, marching through the door, into the restrooms and then out the door again. In fact, the possession of casual information and thus the ability to mis-use settings, is extremely important for the urban dweller. It makes possible the fulfillment of many of his needs with maximum efficiency and minimum danger. The individual who knows there is a public telephone here, a restroom there, a cigarette machine somewhere else, is able to go directly to the source of gratification and is not required to seek the assistance of strangers--always risky--in reaching his goal.<sup>22</sup>

The second sub-type of special information may be termed familiar information, and its possessor, a patron. The patron gains his intelligence through regular use of the setting, but like the customer, the duration of his stay on any one occasion is brief.

His knowledge of the physical features of the setting is on a par with that of the customer, gaining for him the same, but no additional advantages.

But, unlike the customer, the patron is certain to know others in the setting, often by name, always by sight. These "others" will include employees, but may also include fellow patrons. Thus, for example, long-terms patrons of coffee shops, restaurants and bars often come to know the bartenders or waitresses quite well, and are likely to develop a nodding or speaking acquaintance with other regular users. In the same way, the file clerk who passes the same intersection each morning on his way to work is likely to wave in recognition to the traffic

cop or newsdealer stationed there, may even develop the habit of stopping to share a few words with one or the other before hurrying on his way. Or, the regular commuter may establish a friendly relationship with the porter of the depot in which he waits, may even know the depot manager and share an occasional cup of coffee with him.

Familiar information, then, is more complete than casual information because it includes data not only about the facilities of the setting, but about the people who inhabit the setting as well. Through possession of such information, the patron is somewhat better protected from the threat of the unexpected than is the mere customer.

Because of the more complete character of his information, the patron also has a greater potential for risk-free mis-use of the setting than does the customer. By reason of having established a semi-personal relationship with the employees in the setting, he is in a position to gain their acquiescence, even assistance, in utilizing the setting for purposes other than those for which it is specifically intended. He may be able to take a respite from his busy rounds on the comfortable bar stool of his favorite bar without being required to buy a drink. Or, he may use the corner newstand as a shelter from a sudden downpour. Or he may even receive his phone calls at the local delicatessen. The customer, on the other hand, familiar only with the physical layout of the setting, is restricted to types of mis-use which do not require the cooperation or even tacit approval of the

employees in the setting.

It can now be seen that as information about a given public setting increases in detail, from general to special, and within special, from casual to familiar, a peculiar alteration begins to take place in the nature of the setting itself. That is, as the individual increases his information about the public setting, he increases his ability to use it for his own purposes. As his knowledge of the setting gains in complexity, his view of the setting becomes less and less that of an alien place full of strangers and more and more that of a "home territory". When the information possessed by the individual comes close to maximum, the setting ceases to be an urban public locale at all, but becomes in effect, a semi-private place.

The alteration is never complete, of course, because the setting remains, by definition, a place open to public use. Nevertheless, the extent to which public settings can come to be viewed as private territories and the degree to which those who hold this view can come to behave as if it were true, is one of the more remarkable and unique aspects of the general process by which urban man strives to reduce the dangers of his environment.

It is with the acquisition of the third sub-type of special information, intimate information, that the alteration of the setting from a public to a semi-private locale reaches its fruition. The possessor of intimate information is the resident. He gains this information, as does the patron, through regular usage, but unlike

the patron, he remains in the setting, on most occasions, for long periods of time.

His knowledge of the physical features of the setting is detailed, not only with regard to available facilities, but in terms of ebb and flow of usage as well. The resident not only knows where every<sup>th</sup>ing is located within the setting, he also knows when the setting will be full, when empty; when certain facilities will be most in demand, when ignored.

In addition, he is fully aware of all other users of the setting, and is able to place each user into one of four categories: newcomer, customer, patron, or fellow resident.

What truly distinguishes the resident from the customer or patron, however, is not that his intimate information gives him special advantage in legitimate usage of the setting. He is distinguished rather by the extent to which this information makes it possible for him to use the setting for his own purposes (i.e., to mis-use it). This is an extent undreamed of by any of the less knowledgeable types.

The process of alteration from public to semi-private setting is primarily a process by which the possibilities for mis-use are gradually maximized. And as such, the extent to which a public setting is mis-used by an individual or group of individuals, represents the degree to which such individuals or groups have

successfully reduced the dangers of that setting so that they feel free to utilize it much as they would a private place.

Beyond discussion in this chapter, we will not be concerned with residents or patrons. By acquiring information sufficient to qualify for either of these informal roles (particularly the former), these types no longer need additional techniques for neutralizing the dangers in the setting. By reason of possession of detailed information, they create a setting already free of such dangers.

However, the amount of information requisite for qualification as patron or resident is sufficiently large and requires a sufficient investment of time as to preclude any individual from qualifying for these roles in more than a few public settings. Thus, while an individual may be a newcomer or a customer in a large number of places, he can be a patron or resident in only a few. Whenever his rounds take him out of such protected environments he is once again subject to the same dangers as those faced by his fellow urbanites and must possess the same skills as do they for neutralizing dangers. For these reasons, the techniques to be discussed below continue to be of major importance to urban dwellers, even if they are able to dispense with them in a few special settings.

Nevertheless, because the resident, in particular, has achieved a mode of dealing with a part of his urban environment that is remarkable in its protective capacities,



he deserves to be looked at more closely before we take up the strategies and tactics of newcomers and customers.

Public setting residents are of two types: employees, those who possess intimate information and the ability to use it for private purposes because of their employment in the setting; and colonizers, those who possess intimate information and thus the ability to use it for private purposes by reason of voluntarily spending a good deal of time in the setting.

Residents are drawn from the ranks of newcomers, customers and patrons. There are multiple routes leading to attainment of resident status. A newcomer may become a resident simply by gaining employment in a public setting. Or he may move gradually from newcomer to customer to patron to resident-colonizer. The following example illustrates this route.

A man in his mid-forties operated a sign painting business next door to a bar. Shortly after establishing the business, he began to stop by the bar occasionally for a before-dinner drink. Soon, it became a regular stopping place after the day's work. Then, gradually, he began dropping in earlier and earlier in the day. Eventually he was to be found there much of the time. Customers of the sign painting shop gradually began coming to the bar, rather than to his shop in order to find him; and he often received business calls on the bar phone. Although a fairly heavy drinker, he was not an alcoholic and during long periods in the bar, he would make no purchase. His presence for long stretches of time was in no way connected with the bar's primary purpose, that of selling drinks.

One interesting, and not uncommon, route is that which leads from newcomer to customer to patron to resident-employee. Thus, one finds instances in which a young woman attains the role of tavern barmaid after she and her husband establish themselves as patrons of the tavern through their regular usage.

In some cases, the route from customer to resident colonizer may be direct, as when an individual after only minimal contact with a setting, decides to spend a large part of his time there. An interesting example of this route is the case of the young man at a small mid-western college who, lacking sufficient funds to pay dormitory fees, decided to live for a semester in the wooded park which adjoined and was owned by the college. Prior to this time, he had visited the park ~~only on~~ a few occasions, but having made his decision, he began at once to sleep, study and entertain friends in his new home.

All residents exhibit, to a greater or lesser degree, three characteristics, all of which demonstrate the extent to which they view the setting as a private, or at least semi-private place.

First, as already noted, they tend to use the setting, to a great extent, for their own private purposes rather than confining themselves to the use for which the setting is primarily designed. This is, of course, the primary characteristic of the resident and it is <sup>his</sup> ability to so use the setting which transforms it from a public to a semi-private place.

Second, they tend to indulge in what Erving Goffman has called "the backstage language of behavior."

Throughout Western society there tends to be one informal or backstage language of behavior, and another language of behavior for occasions when a performance is being presented. The backstage language consists of reciprocal first-naming, cooperative decision-making, profanity, open sexual remarks, elaborate gripping, smoking, rough informal dress, "sloppy" sitting and standing posture, use of dialect or sub-standard speech, mumbling and shouting, playful aggressivity and "kidding", inconsiderateness for the other in minor but potentially symbolic acts, minor physical self-involvements such as humming, whistling, chewing, nibbling, belching and flatulence.<sup>23</sup>

Third, they tend to hold an attitude of proprietary rights toward the setting, similar to that which an individual might have toward his own home.

Whether one, two, or all three of these characteristics are exhibited to a greater or lesser degree, depends on a number of additional factors. These include such matters as whether the resident is an employee or a colonizer; whether he becomes a resident entirely on his own, or as part of a group; and whether the exhibition of the characteristic depends upon the support or tacit approval of others--residents, patrons, customers or newcomers.

Some of the ways in which these factors affect exhibition will be noted as each characteristic is discussed in turn.

There is nothing startling in the assertion that employees utilize their places of employment for private purposes--whether that place of employment happens to be a public setting or not. Work places are commonly locales in which romances bloom and friendships form; in which troubles are aired and counsel is given, and in which personal letters are written and personal phone

calls are received. The extent to which any place of employment may be used for such purposes varies, of course, depending upon the type of work site, attitude of employer, amount of slack time, etc. One thing is clear, however. Employees in public settings (the only work site of concern here) are considerably more restricted in their pursuit of private purposes than are colonizers. The young woman stationed in an airport terminal insurance booth may be able to devote herself to knitting or socializing with the guard during slack periods, but when customers are numerous, she must switch her devotion to work requirements or risk losing her job. The manager of a bus depot may spend a good deal of his day drinking coffee with acquaintances, but he is expected to spend sufficient time at work to keep the depot running at at least a minimal level of efficiency.

In contrast, resident colonizers are, by definition, devoting the major portion of their time in the setting to the pursuit of private purposes. Some bus depots, for example, have been colonized by aged pensioners and skid row males who use them as second homes, arriving early in the morning, coming and going throughout the day, leaving only at night. Within these settings they meet and visit with their fellow residents (employees and colonizers), read their papers, make plans for outings. Friends and relatives may "call on" them here, as in the case of an aged gentleman whose equally aged fiancée came to see him one afternoon to discuss their impending marriage and social security difficulties. Or, as in the case of another aged gentleman, meeting his daughter one noon for a brown

bag lunch.

Colonization of this sort, of course, would be impossible without the at least tacit consent of employees or whoever else might have responsibility for the setting. One has only to view a group of pensioners loitering all day under a sign which reads, "Loitering Prohibited-- Violators Will Be Prosecuted", to understand that this is the case.

Other types of colonization are equally dependant upon the tacit approval of others. Bars which serve as homosexual meeting places could not do so for long if the managers wished otherwise.<sup>24</sup> A laundromat, situated close to a university campus, could not serve as a substitute "coffee house" for male students without at least a grudging willingness on the part of the owner.

The necessity for this tacit approval is most clearly seen in cases where having once been granted, it is withdrawn, or where having never been granted, the colonization is soon halted.

One example of the former situation is the following. A small park, located just off the business section of a midwestern city had been used for years by skid row alcoholics as a combined meeting place, hotel, restaurant and bar. However, after several citizens complained of the spectacle thus created, police saw to it that the park was cleared of its residents.

In cases where approval has never been granted, discovery of the colonization often leads to its elimination. Thus, for example, when it came to the attention of officials in another midwestern area that certain highway

rest stops were being used as homosexual meeting places, measures were immediately taken to bring such "mis-use" to a halt.<sup>25</sup>

Continuing colonization is possible without the tacit consent of those responsible for the setting, but in such cases, camouflage becomes essential. However, it seems unlikely that any large numbers of persons can successfully colonize without tacit approval. (Certainly unapproved colonizers may be part of a group and learn the ways of colonization through the group; but if they are to be successful, they cannot appear in the setting with large numbers of their fellows.) Camouflaged colonization also greatly restricts the exhibition of the other characteristics of residents, particularly backstage language.

In a delightful book, Subways Are For Sleeping, Edmund G. Love tells of the numerous uses to which public settings are put by persons who live in New York without money. The book is replete with examples of the necessity for camouflage if such persons are to be successful. Witness the following excerpts.

I know of two men who have been living in Grand Central station for almost ten years. They have learned to vary their routine enough to maintain the anonymity necessary for such a project.<sup>26</sup>

Shelby says that it is always advisable to carry something when sleeping in a lobby. House officers are apt to respect a man's privacy if he has an umbrella or brief case lying in his lap.<sup>27</sup>

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

all night without being molested if he continues to read a paper.<sup>28</sup>

Most men in his condition [penniless] who visit the Public Library go to the reading rooms. Either they have never heard of the microfilm room or they underestimate its possibilities. Consequently, the attendants there have never met a real vagrant face to face. They assume that anyone who has heard of microfilm and wishes to use it is in search of learning. They check the film out to the applicant and never follow up. Moreover, the accommodations are very comfortable. The room is warm, and the upright film-display stands give a man an excellent place to rest his head.<sup>29</sup>

In each of these instances, the individual, lacking the tacit approval of those in charge, was required to act in such a way as to suggest that his use of the setting was a legitimate one--he was required to act, in effect, as if he were in a public place.

In contrast, colonizers blessed with approval need be prepared for no such performances. They are free, rather, to behave (at least within limits) as if they were in the privacy of their own homes.

Thus, some pensioners in bus depots make no pretense of being there to take a bus. They carry nothing to suggest that they might be travelling and move about the depot in an easy-going, unhurried way. No one watching could possibly assume their presence was in any way related to the hurry-up business of travel. They make no bones about the fact that they know one another, often hailing each other by first name across the room. When a pensioner sits down to take a nap, he does so purposefully, settling himself as comfortably as possible, making no attempt to suggest that the resulting nap is accidental.

Their dress is casual, often sloppy, usually wrinkled, although most generally clean. A few do affect a suit and tie, sometimes even a hat, but the various items of apparel seldom match, and no one would be likely to take them for travelling businessmen.

Of course, such backstage language is limited. The resident colonizer may relax his behavior a good deal, but the fact remains, he is in a public place and if he is to retain approval for his colonization, such relaxation must be controlled. Thus, while a pensioner may feel sufficiently at ease in the setting to wait until after leaving the rest room to finish zipping his trousers; he is well advised to make certain such casualness results in no "exposure". And while he may have no compunction about relieving a genital itch while seated in the midst of the waiting area, he must make a least a passing effort at covering such action with his free hand.

Employees, too, are restricted in the extent to which they may display backstage language. Should the setting be dominated by sympathetic and supportive patrons and residents, the restrictions may be minimal. A young barmaid may, if the setting is filled with people she knows well, lounge behind the counter, freely discuss her sex life, even loudly ask a patron or resident to take over while she goes to the rest room. But should a newcomer or customer appear, she will be constrained to present herself in a more business-like manner. A depot manager, in shirt sleeves with tie askew, may sit with his feet on the desk of his glass paneled office as long as



the depot contains no one who will take offense. But when a business associate is due for an appointment, he will sit up, put on his jacket, straighten his tie, and generally prepare to show himself in a more professional light.

Just as there is great variation in the extent to which residents may mis-use a public setting or indulge in backstage language, so, too, there is great variation in the extent and type of proprietary rights or attitudes which may be displayed.

Camouflaged colonizers, such as the vagrants described by Love, are greatly restricted in this regard. Since they are present without approval in the first place, it ill behooves them to call attention to themselves by acting as if the setting were their own.

Proprietary attitudes among approved residents take a variety of forms, "acting the host" being the mildest and most common. Among resident employees, of course, this is not only tolerated but expected. Such tasks as giving directions and offering assistance are part of the employee's job. But "acting the host" is not restricted to employees, colonizers commonly take on such a role. Among bus depot pensioners, the host attitude displays itself as a willingness, even eagerness, to assist confused travelers, as the following incident will illustrate.

A young man is seated at a bench near the front of the depot. Nearby, a raincoated pensioner, who has been in this location most of the morning, is reading his paper. An unintelligible announcement comes over the loudspeaker. The young man rises as if to leave, then hesitates, uncertain. He turns to the pensioner, asks for clarification as to the announcement.

The pensioner replies that the Kalamazoo, not the Flint bus was called. He asks the young man what time his bus was supposed to leave. The reply is 11:15. The pensioner nods, puts down his paper, pulls out a schedule and looks at it. Then he informs the young man that both Greyhound and Short Line have changed their schedules within the last few days and as a result, everything is very confused. He suggests being patient, assuring him that the Flint bus will be along soon.

The schedule which the pensioner consulted was only one among many carried in his pocket. Later, after the young man had departed, he pulled out the entire stack and began going over them one by one with great concentration. The adequate host, apparently, must have his information straight.

A somewhat stronger proprietary attitude has to do with the resident's treatment of property items found in the setting. Pensioners, for example, claim any newspaper not in the hands of another as their own, and having read it, take the owner's prerogative of passing it on to someone else. The oft-noted propensity of employees to steal from their work places may have less to do with "bureaucratic distance" than with a strong sense of proprietary rights.

But the strongest expression of proprietary rights involves an attempt to restrict access to the setting. Such attempts are rarely totally successful, when they are, the setting ceases to be a public place and becomes a private club.

In most situations, any attempts at restriction are resisted by those in charge of the setting. Thus aircraft maintenance crews may feel they have a claim to certain tables in the airport cafeteria, but were

they to insist that customers seated at the tables move elsewhere, management sanctions would be speedily applied. Attempts by adolescent gangs to stake out certain streets as "turf" and then control traffic flow within the area, are met with strong disapproval and resistance by city authorities. Nevertheless, such attempts may, for<sup>a</sup> while, be successful, particularly if the gang is large. No such even short term success could be expected by a lone colonizer. He can too easily be overcome by a superior force.

However, with the support, or at least neutrality, of those in charge, colonizers may display their proprietary rights to such an extent that the setting can be said to be public only in the most technical sense.

In her work on homosexual bars, Sherri Cavan has described one such locale.

Inasmuch as the Hangout is defined first as a public drinking place and only alternatively as a home territory for homosexuals, the degree to which the invasion of outsiders can be curtailed by the indigenous population is limited. The interest of the owner in maintaining the bar as a profitable business establishment tends to set the limits on the degree to which the bar can be converted into a private territory. In this sense, then, no outsider can be forceably removed from the area unless he can be categorized as a public nuisance. But on the part of the indigenous population, the difference between legitimate customers and public nuisances is often vague and in general almost all outsiders are classified somewhere in between, as objects which can be officially treated in improper ways.<sup>30</sup>

The indigenous population of the Hangout defended its territory by "bending, abridging and breaking the interaction rules of polite society."<sup>31</sup> Any stranger entering the bar became the focus of attention, the object of public comment, the butt of repeated jokes. His masculinity was questioned, his female companion (if any) was insulted. While such defensive measures did not completely restrict outsider access (which would not have been tolerated by the owner), it most certainly did succeed in limiting access. Having undergone such an experience on one occasion, many persons simply chose never to return.

A final and more general aspect of proprietary attitudes in public places may now be stated. To the extent that such attitudes are held by a sufficiently large number in any given setting and to the extent that they do not preclude hospitality to outsiders, they may be highly functional for the maintenance of public safety and order in that setting. As Jane Jacobs has pointed out, if city sidewalks are to be safe places

. . . there should be, in the brains behind the eyes on the street, an almost unconscious assumption of general street support when the chips are down.<sup>32</sup>

The resident is, after all, on his home ground and the integrity of a man's home must not be violated. As such, it seems unlikely that, given the assurance of support from his fellow residents, he would simply stand and watch as a girl is raped, or as was recently reported, as a man is robbed and stabbed.<sup>38</sup>

But let us not be too harsh on those who only watch. The resident can afford to become involved, for having neutralized the dangers of the setting through the acquisition of intimate knowledge, he need not be continually concerned with proper presentation. For the newcomer or customer, however, as shall become very clear below, presentation is the overriding concern--far more important than any moral mandate to help one's neighbor. For most persons in public settings<sup>s</sup>, the primary objective is to avoid, at all cost, appearing the fool. To offer assistance to strangers, to charge in where angels fear to tread, is to open oneself up to possible rebuke, ridicule and humiliating failure (including the ultimate humiliation--death). To understand that the urban setting is a battle ground where man fights to protect his fragile self from destructuion, is to gain some understanding of why he may not wish to "get involved."

#### Information About Persons in Public Settings

The primary concern of this study is with the strategies and tactics of those persons who may be considered newcomers or customers. While the patron or resident may have "insider" knowledge of persons in a small number of public settings, he is in a no better informational position than any other newcomer or customer in most of the public settings into which his rounds bring him. Therefore, in discussing the third

type of intelligence information, that regarding persons in public places, we shall be focusing on information gained through means other than personal acquaintance.

We are not concerned with information based on expectations as to who will be present in a given setting, since such information is a part of general intelligence about the setting itself. The focus is rather on information possessed by the individual prior to his information into a given setting which gives him a basis for making specific judgments about, and determining tactics in relation to, the persons who surround him once he is actually in the setting.

This information is of two kinds. One has to do with knowledge of what Ray Birdwhistell calls the language of body motion. This information is part of each individual's cultural heritage; with it he is able to determine the meaning of the thousands of minute, complex and interrelated gestures which humans employ in their non-verbal communication with one another. Of course, given the social and cultural heterogeneity of the urban setting, much of his interpretation may be incorrect. Nevertheless, it is certainly a part of the equipment which urban man uses in making judgments about others and thus guiding his own behavior.

This type of information will not be of major concern here because it is not unique to, or even of greatest importance in, the urban public setting. It is rather, an important form of communication in all types of human interaction--just as much between mother and child as between stranger and stranger (perhaps more

so since accurate judgments based on this kind of information probably require a fairly intimate knowledge of the person making the communication). Edward T. Hall provides us with a nice example of its use in one of the most intimate of relationships.

When a husband comes home from the office, takes off his hat, hangs up his coat and says "Hi" to his wife, the way in which he says "Hi", reinforced by the manner in which he sheds his overcoat, summarizes his feelings about the way things went at the office. If his wife wants the details she may have to listen for awhile, yet she grasps in an instant the significant message for her; namely, what kind of an evening they are going to spend and how she is going to have to cope with it.<sup>35</sup>

The second, and from the standpoint of modern man in the urban setting, more unique type of knowledge has to do with the meanings assigned to body presentations-- items of clothing, styling of hair, grooming, etc. Just as soldiers in battle wear uniforms to assist them in identifying each other and the enemy, so too, does modern man employ various body presentations to identify himself to the enemy and to identify the enemy to himself. A knowledge of the culturally assigned meanings of various body presentations is an essential part of the intelligence information used by man in his everyday task of self-defense.

As developed in Chapter I, large urban settings present a preponderance of occasions to see rather than hear people. Most of the persons who surround us are total strangers, we have no basis for making judgments

about them except the information gleaned through our eyes. If we are to know how to conduct ourselves with safety in their presence, then we must be able to make some assumptions about them based on what we see: their clothing, grooming, hair style, etc.--based, in short, on body presentation.<sup>36</sup>

Information regarding people in public settings may be divided into two types: general, or knowledge of the way in which social status, rank, class, etc. are communicated through overall body presentation; and special, or knowledge of the way in which specific occupational roles are communicated through equally specific body presentations. As with public setting intelligence, special information is considerably more complete and less subject to error than is general information.

General Information. One of the ways in which we provide ourselves with some basis for predicting the behavior of others, thus lessening their potential threat, is by placing them in categories such as age, sex and class. If we know the other, information as a basis for categorization may be gleaned through interaction. If we do not know the other, as with the stranger in the public setting, then our categorization depends on inference from sets of visual cues.<sup>37</sup> As John Lofland and Robert Lejeune have pointed out:

In the urban setting the objective social class ranks of actors have low visibility. In lieu of viewing the actual ranks which determine an actor's social class, symbolic means of communicating social class occupancy develop. These social class symbols select for a given actor the social class that is to be imputed to another actor.<sup>38</sup>



The reference here is only to cues utilized in imputing social class, but such cues are also used in determining, at least to a degree, age and sex. Because of the great variation among individuals in physiological signs of age; dress style, hair style, etc, are probably utilized a good deal more than is usually assumed in placing persons into age categories. And because clothing covers those parts of the body which most unmistakably identify sex, body presentation is an important determinant of the imputation of maleness or femaleness.<sup>39</sup>

Information about the meaning of overall body presentation derives from a variety of sources: previous experience with persons of known age, sex and class, detailed portrayals of various categories of persons in the mass media, and sometimes, the more detailed descriptions of scholars.

I will not here catalogue the multitude of attributes which go to make up body presentation or to point out the exact meanings assigned to each, whether separately or in combination with other attributes. This is a highly complex matter and one not easily summarized.<sup>40</sup> One example of the kinds of attributes which might be catalogued, and the meanings which may be imputed to them will suffice. The following is a list of four types of male presentation styles, current in the late fifties, which was utilized by Lofland and Lejeune in a study of Alcoholics Anonymous.

- I. Upper middle and Upper Class: well groomed, clean, latest style clothes (especially suits and ties), subdued colored clothes which are neatly pressed, of good quality, not worn and are of matching colors (using as criteria the present men's fashion advertisements).
- II. Lower-Middle Class: less well groomed, clean wearing suits and ties but of out-dated style, colors not so subdued, clothes showing some wear, fair to poor quality, less well pressed, articles of "clashing" colors.
- III. Working Class: not so well groomed, clean wash trousers, no suit coat (a waist jacket usually) no ties, "clashing" colors.
- IV. Derelect: poorly groomed, dirty, dirty wash pants, suit coat (usually out of style, worn, unpressed, dirty).<sup>41</sup>

Special Information. Knowledge of the way in which specific occupational roles are communicated through equally specific body presentation is referred to here as special information regarding people in public settings. That is, special information constitutes a knowledge of uniforms and the occupational roles which they designate. Interesting enough, modern urban man, despite his greater need for special identification cues, probably has less special information available to him than did his ancestors. Large numbers of today's occupational roles require no specific uniform and the urban dweller is often hard pressed to tell a sales clerk from a customer, a lawyer from a client.<sup>42</sup>

Where specialized uniforms are used, however, they are of great assistance. With only a glance, the individual can ascertain the exact standing of the uniformed other (for occupational role also designates class and status) and can determine precisely how he should behave should contact with the other become necessary.

Identification of non-uniformed persons is much trickier and much more liable to error. Such identification requires closer attention, there is a necessity to take note of a larger number of attributes. Contact, should it be necessary, is riskier, requiring the individual to open himself up for interaction with a potentially threatening stranger. Uncertain of the identity of the other, he will be uncertain of the appropriateness of his own behavior in relation to the other. Should it prove inappropriate, he will have shown himself to be inadequate, unworthy, or illegitimate and will face ridicule, embarrassment or shame.

Uniforms, however, not only reduce the perils of contact and limit the amount of information required for identification, they make it unnecessary to think of the other as a person at all.

To engage meaningfully in some transactions it is enough to know merely "what" the parties are--to know their identities. This would seem often to be the case in the anonymous transactions of the masses. As Louis Wirth used to tell his students in his elaborations of the "massive" character of urban life, "You go to a bootblack to have your shoes shined; not to save your soul." The implication is, I think, that when we become concerned with the bootblack's moods or his larger worth in terms of some scheme of value, our relations to him will lose their anonymous character.<sup>43</sup>

To know for certain that a person is a bootblack (i.e. to recognize the uniform) is to be able to dismiss him as being anything else, to relegate him to the category of non-person, to use Erving Goffman's term.<sup>44</sup> Once identification is made, contact follows a standardized, programmed ritual and the uniformed person may be

dismissed from awareness, leaving the individual free to take note of and prepare himself for other potential sources of threat in the environment.

The lack of genuine "interaction" between the individual and uniformed non-persons is well illustrated in the common complaint of nuns that no one ever looks at their faces, or in the ability of a uniformed workman to enter a woman's restroom without attracting any notice. Or even more explicitly, in the following account.

A cat may not everywhere look at a king, nor does a person of position always look at a person of none. I was once a party to a practical joke, the point of which was to see whether a certain lady would recognize her own son were he to attend us, her guests, as a valet. She did not, as she never looked at his face.<sup>45</sup>

\* \* \*

Having focused on types of adequate and correct information, let us consider some of the difficulties created by incorrect intelligence or mis-information.

#### THE PROBLEM OF MIS-INFORMATION

However much information urban man may acquire as a basis for guiding himself both strategically and tactically, there is always the possibility that his information is incorrect. Whether the mis-information concerns coping techniques, public settings or people in public settings, the result is the same. The individual acting on the basis of such information must face the serious challenge to self which his actions elicit. In each case, the self which he wishes to present is disconfirmed; in each case, he is shown to be less than he claims; and in each

case he must cope with the inevitable consequence--a lowering of self-esteem and the production of anxiety. However, in each case the nature of the challenge is somewhat different.

#### Mis-Information About Coping Techniques

When the incorrect information concerns coping techniques (and thus, the conventions which underlie them) the individual's self as adequate is challenged. He demonstrates to all who wish to see that he does not "know the score," that he cannot play by the rules, that he is doomed to fail.

The special characteristic of mis-information of this type, and the reason it presents a more profound threat than do other types of mis-information has to do with the great difficulty involved in rectifying the situation which it creates.

Coping techniques are part of the informal aspects of culture. The individual who uses them is scarcely aware that he does so; his ability to use them, like his ability to walk, is "second nature". And, since he is not fully conscious of what he is doing, if what he is doing is wrong, he will have great difficulty pinpointing the source of the trouble. (Information about settings and people, on the other hand, is quite conscious, and should it prove incorrect, the individual is in a fairly good position to rectify his error almost at once). He will know that all is not well, but he will not know why, and in all likelihood, he will go on to compound the initial error.

Self-confirmation from those around him is being

denied; yet he is at a loss to know why and he is thus unable to make the requisite changes in his behavior.<sup>46</sup> The result is confusion, chaos and the welling up of anxiety.

Fortunately for urban man's continued well-being, the incidence of mis-information about coping techniques is probably rare. As we have seen, most persons raised in an urban society, receive the correct information about these techniques almost as automatically as they receive the correct information about language. The problems created by technique mis-information are most likely to occur in situations where the individual moves from an urban setting in one culture to an urban setting in another, and the problems are likely to be most severe if the new culture is radically different from the old. This would seem to be, at least in part, what is involved in the experience of "culture shock".

Although concerned with a situation that occurs in cross-cultural private contacts between acquaintances, the following passage is equally illustrative of the kinds of difficulties which may arise in cross-cultural public contacts between strangers.

In Latin America the interaction distance is much less than it is in the United States. Indeed, people cannot talk comfortably with one another unless they are very close to the distance that evokes either sexual or hostile feelings in the North American. The result is that when they move close, we withdraw and back away. As a consequence, they think we are distant or cold, withdrawn and unfriendly. We, on the other hand, are constantly accusing them of breathing down our necks, crowding us, and spraying our faces.

Americans who have spent some time in Latin America without learning these space considerations make other adaptations, like barricading themselves behind their desks, using chairs and typewriter tables to keep the Latin American at what is to us a comfortable distance. The result is that the Latin American may even climb over the obstacles until he has achieved a distance at which he can comfortably talk.<sup>47</sup>

#### Mis-Information About Public Settings

In situations where the mis-information concerns public settings, the challenge is of a different sort; adequacy is not challenged. Rather it is the self as worthy which is under question.

When he appears in a public setting, have pre-conceived and thus prepared for it on the basis of incorrect intelligence, the individual exposes himself to the invidious suggestion that he is less worthy, less deserving of regard than he thought himself to be.

Thus, the unwary traveler, driving into a highway rest stop, used as a meeting place for homosexuals, discovers to his horror that his conception of himself as "fully masculine" (i.e. worthy) is seriously challenged. To the residents, assuming that his mere presence is evidence that he is one of them, he becomes fair game for a proposition.

Similarly, the casually dressed woman, believing that the restaurant she is about to enter has a "come as you are" policy will find, upon entering and noting the formal dress of all others present, that her conception of herself as one who "knows how to dress" (i.e. worthy) is under attack.

Although the threat to self in such situations is as serious as the threat to he whose techniques prove incorrect, the former situation need not be prolonged. The individual is fully conscious of the error and may rectify it merely by leaving the setting.

#### Mis-Information About People in Public Settings

To be possessed of the third type of mis-information, that concerning people in public settings, presents yet another kind of challenge; in this case it is the individual's self as legitimate which is under attack.

The problem arises when the individual, possessed of incorrect information, mis-identifies someone in the setting and establishes contact with that person on the basis of the mis-identity. Thus the presentation style assume<sup>d</sup> for the contact proves to be inappropriate. In the discovery of his error and the subsequent attempt to rectify it through alteration of his presentation style, the individual shows himself to be insincere, to be "phony", changing himself to fit the occasion--in short to be in possession of an untrustworthy and illegitimate self.

The extent to which mis-identification is threatening to the mis-identified as well as to the mis-identifier is variable, depending upon the nature of the label which has been mis-applied. Thus, the customer mistaken for a sales clerk is unlikely to experience any threat; while the wife mistaken for a prostitute will experience a great deal. It seems likely that in most situations, the greatest threat is to he who possesses the least correct



information, and this in most cases is he who makes the mis-identification.<sup>48</sup> Armed with a much firmer grasp of what is going on, the mis-identified is in a much better position to control the interaction and maintain his self both intact and unthreatened.

Mis-identification is a common theme of Western literature. Not surprisingly, since the deck is stacked in his favor, it is the mis-identified who is most commonly portrayed as the hero. His compensation for having to undergo contact with one whose self is obviously illegitimate is the permission to prolong the situation. The villain is allowed to become ever more deeply entangled until finally the moment of disclosure is reached and having made a "perfect ass of himself", the villain crawls away to lick his wounds.

Regardless of the fact that alteration of presentation style to fit the audience is universally practiced in social life, denial that such a situation exists is stoutly maintained.<sup>49</sup> The public ethic is rather, as Professor Henry Higgins tells Eliza in My Fair Lady, it doesn't matter how you treat people, the important thing is that you treat everyone the same.

The source of mis-identification of persons in public settings is two-fold. The meaning of body language may be mis-interpreted as in the following instance (although in this case there was a deliberate attempt to promote the wrong impression).

. . . one of Bertha's favorite strategies [to gain access to potential converts for the millenarian sect of which she was a member] was to patronize coffee shops and snack bars and to feign the appearance of the single girl lingering long over her coffee. By unabashedly making eye contact and acknowledging smiles, she invited men to initiate access to her. She recognized the sexual assumptions of these contacts and consciously sought to exploit them for the DP. She would explain the male's conduct to him in veiled religious terms, noting that many people were seeking for something today. The play between her and her erstwhile partner typically culminated in an invitation to dinner. The ambiguity of these overtures can perhaps best be judged by the occasion on which a young sailor appeared for dinner with a bottle of wine for two, only to find a rice-based meal set for seven, chaperoned by a Korean lady.<sup>50</sup>

Or, it may be body-presentation which is the source of confusion.

The sex of an individual may be incorrectly indentified, a not too uncommon occurrence since the rise of what is called uni-sex.

The 16-year-old was preparing for a Saturday-night date. The first step was a lengthy visit to the hair stylist for the treatment: shampoo, trim and a delicate shaping of the side-swept bangs topped off with several applications of a scented hair spray. Then it was back home to administer cologne. Finally, the uniform--high-heeled boots, tweed hip-huggers, ring belt, ruffled burgandy shirt and Liverpool cap.

Before the process began, the 16-year-old was unmistakably a him or a her. But what finally emerged was a Uni-sex--a peculiar new class of teenage androgyny. Uni-sex. . . has set off a wave of mistaken-identity cases among parents, teachers, store clerks, waiters, policemen and, on occasion, even the kids themselves. . . . But the last word on the triumph of Uni-sex comes, appropriately, from London, where it all began. A recent issue of London Life, which featured an eight-page color spread of males in "vibrant red corduroys" and females in "sailcloth trouser suits", proclaimed, "Girls are looking like boys who look like girls."<sup>51</sup>

More commonly, class standing is subject to mis-identification. The increase of mass production in the clothing industry and the wide distribution of fashion magazines, makes it quite possible for the sales clerk in a high fashion salon to appear (at least to the non-expert eye) as finely clad as her customers. In addition, the tendency on the part of some individuals to "dress down", particularly for leisure activities, adds to the problem of easy identification.<sup>52</sup> Thus, a young actor of some fame can report that while standing in front of his hotel, dressed in his usual leisure style, a movie star of even more fame mistook him for an automobile jockey and tipped him a quarter to get his car.

\* \* \*

One final point. Incorrect intelligence is most often based on general information. Special information, whether of settings or people, is more complete and thus more likely to be correct. When it is not correct, those carrying the mis-information feel deliberately deceived. When special information about a public setting proves to be incorrect, we refer to the setting as a "front"; when about a person in a public setting, we refer to an "imposter". In either case, our fragile selves having been deliberately exposed to danger by callous others, we feel severe sanctions are appropriate.

## CHAPTER II NOTES

1. See, for example, Lewis Mumford, The City in History, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).

2. Increasing urbanism is, of course, a world-wide phenomenon although it is most typical of highly industrialized areas. While this paper can claim to discuss only coping techniques utilized in the United States, the problems created by urbanism for anxiety free social life and the necessity for developing some set of techniques to cope with them is probably universal. In any given area, how serious the problems or the numbers of people affected is, of course, dependant upon the extent of urbanization.

3. Silver, Allan "On The Demand for Order in Civil Society" unpublished, working paper #11 of the Center for Research on Social Organization, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, p. 12.

4. For an analysis of the way in which confrontation with the stigmatized is an assault on the American's sense of self, see Erving Goffman, Stigma (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963).

5. Some conception of the conventions which guide the relations between strangers in the United States might be gained by a thorough review of municipal laws governing public conduct. No collection of relevant laws is presently available in printed form. To obtain one, it would be necessary to examine municipal ordinances of all, or a major portion of the cities of the U.S.

6. Jacobs, Jane, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), pp. 31-32.
7. Hall, Edward T., The Silent Language (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1959), p. 71.
8. The implications of this fact for data collection are discussed in the appendix.
9. Young, John H., Our Deportment (Detroit: F. B. Dickerson and Co., 1881), p. 151.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 155.
12. The Housekeeper's Helper, (New York: Union Publishing House, 1892), p. 560.
13. Brant, Ethel Cushing, Standard Etiquette (New York: J. H. Sears & Company, Inc., 1925), pp. 115-116.
14. Boykin, Eleanor, This Way Please (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 20.
15. Ibid., p. 211.
16. Sprackling, Helen, Courtesy, A Book of Modern Manners (New York: M. Barrows & Co., Inc., 1944), p. 219.
17. Ibid., p. 232.
18. Vanderbilt, Amy, New Complete Book of Etiquette (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1962).
19. Young, John H., op. cit., pp. 145-146.
20. Waters, Harry F., "The Disenchanted: Girls In The City", The New York Times Magazine (February 6, 1966), p. 34.

21. There are exceptions, of course. The bars cited in The New York Times Magazine article have been defined as quite legitimate for females sans escorts to enter. And in 1958, in Washington, D.C., a city noted for its uneven male-female ratio, certain bars and restaurants were known as places where groups of women might go without fear of being "molested". Such detailed general information is not always available, however, as the following report illustrates.

In 1963-64, in a mid-western city, a female friend and I made it a practice every few weeks, to treat ourselves to a dinner in one or another of the city's many fine restaurants, all of which also served cocktails. We initially chose sites that we knew to be frequented by families; even on weekend evenings, we knew that children would be present. One particularly fine restaurant was avoided, however, because we were aware that it catered primarily to couples and business men. We both wanted to go there, but did not wish to subject ourselves to any embarrassing "incidents". The issue was resolved only after having called the manager of the restaurant, we were assured that unaccompanied ladies would be most welcome and the management would see to it that no untoward incidents occurred. The friend and I also, on occasion, wished to have a cocktail together, either before or after some scheduled event. Where, and at what times we might safely do so, were topics of repeated discussions.

It may well be that the American female in the American city is required to possess general knowledge of public settings in far greater abundance than is her male counterpart.

22. Information about the location of rest rooms is particularly helpful. As Edward T. Hall has noted:

The distribution of public toilets in America reflects our tendency to deny the existence of urgency even with normal physiological needs. I know of no other place in the world where anyone leaving home or office is put to periodic

torture because great pains have been taken to hide the location of rest rooms. Yet Americans are the people who judge the advancement of others by their plumbing. [op. cit., p. 138].

The fact that public rest rooms are not readily available in American cities probably leads to the mis-use of those which are known about. And the tendency to mis-use toilet facilities may account for the apparent tendency of builders to locate them such that they are extremely difficult to find. Which leads, of course, to even great mis-use once their location has been spotted. The exception to this is the gas station, where rest rooms are prominently located and often advertised. Apparently the only Americans who have to go to the bathroom are those in automobiles.

23. Goffman, Erving, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 128.

24. For a description of one sort of agreement which may be worked out between management and colonizers see Cavan, Sherri "Interaction in Home Territories", Berkeley Journal of Sociology, Vol. VIII (1963) 17-32.

25. Ann Arbor News ( ). Interestingly enough, this situation was brought to the attention of officials because the colonizers were behaving as though the rest stops were home territory. Any lone males entering the rest stops were assumed to be fellow homosexuals and were approached as such. The complaint of one such mis-identified male brought in the police.

26. Love, Edmund G., Subways Are For Sleeping (New York: The New American Library, 1957), p. 7.
27. Ibid., p. 18
28. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
29. Ibid., p. 23.
30. op. cit., pp. 24-25.
31. Ibid., p. 21.
32. op. cit., p. 56.
33. The Detroit Free Press (April 9, 1959).
34. The individual not only possesses information about the meaning of body motions, but uses such motions in his various tactical maneuvers. We shall not, however, be concerned with the exact meanings assigned to various gestures. This is an extremely complex matter and the intricacies involved are beyond the scope of this study. The interested reader is referred to Ray Birdwhistell, Introduction to Kinesics (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, 1952). See also J. Ruesch and W. Kees, Nonverbal Communication: Notes on the Visual Perception of Human Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956); S. Feldman, Mannerisms of Speech and Gestures in Everyday Life (New York: King's Crown Press, 1941); M. Critchley, The Language of Gesture (London: Edward Arnold, 1939); and E.T. Hall, The Silent Language, op. cit.
35. Hall, Edward T. op. cit., p. 94.



36. I do not mean to suggest that the ability to judge persons on the basis of body presentation is unique to modern man. Certainly this ability has been present throughout history. I wish only to suggest that for urban man, such an ability becomes uniquely important.

37. For a nice discussion of the problems of maintaining the integrity and reliability of such cues, see Erving Goffman, "Symbols of Class Status", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 2 (December, 1951), 294-304.

38. Lofland, John and Robert Lejuene, "Initial Interaction of Newcomers in Alcoholics Anonymous; A Field Experiment in Class Symbols and Socialization", Social Problems, Vol. 8 (Fall, 1960), 103.

39. As is nicely indicated by the ability of an occasional "transvestite" to "pass." For further evidence of the extent to which determination of sex is based on body presentation, see the following section on "mis-information".

40. For research in this area, the reader is referred to John Lofland, Newcomers in Alcoholics Anonymous; A Field Experiment in Class Symbolish and Socialization, unpublished MA thesis, Columbia University, 1960; and W. H. Form & Gregory P. Stone, "Urbanism, Anonymity and Status Symbolism", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. LXII (March, 1957), 504-514.

41. Lofland & Lejeune, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

42. Many periods of history have been characterized by very detailed uniforms designating exact occupations.

[See, for example, Carl Kohler, History of Costume

( ); LaCroix, Paul, Costume

and Dress During the Middle Ages and During the Renaissance Period (London: Chapman & Hall, 1876).]

As late as the second half of the 19th Century, occupations led to sufficiently distinct body presentations so as to enable the perceptive observer to make accurate guesses as to occupational standing based on sight alone. Sherlock Holmes very cleverly utilized these clues to dumfound his clients and foes by announcing their occupational identities to them before they had a chance to announce themselves. As Holmes himself often said, the clues are all there, one has only to perceive them. Nor was there anything "fictional" about such abilities. A. Conan Doyle endowed his famous creation with a perceptiveness which he himself possessed. [See, Doyle, A. Conan, The Complete Sherlock Holmes (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1930); and Carr, John Dickson, The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (New York: Harper, 1949).

43. Stone, Gregory P. "Appearance and the Self" in Arnold M. Rose, ed., Human Behavior and Social Process (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 96.

44. Goffman, Erving, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, op. cit., p. 151.

45. Parsons, Elsie Clews, Fear and Conventionality (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 55.

46. In The Birth and Death of Meaning (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), Ernest Becker has suggested that it is just this lack of correct information regarding techniques and conventions (although he is referring to

the full range of techniques and conventions utilized in all social relationships--not just in those between strangers) that is at the core of mental illness, particularly, schizophrenia.

47. Hall, op. cit., p. 164

48. The situation would seem to be reversed if the mis-identifier is a resident or patron. That is, the resident or patron always possesses greater information than does the customer or newcomer. Should he mis-identify one of these, he still has the protection of being on home ground and the burden of proof is on the other.

49. Of course, we all alter our presentation style to fit the occasion. However, we take great pains to keep these various styles separate, playing one for this audience, another for that audience. When one style is viewed by more than one audience at the same time, the whole beautiful fiction about the integrity and wholeness of the self is called into question and is seen as just that, a fiction. See Erving Goffman, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, op. cit., on the importance of audience segregation.

50. Lofland, John, Doomsday Cult (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 115.

51. "Uni-Sex", Newsweek Magazine (February 14, 1966), p. 59.

52. The writer, on several occasions during the course of observation, was unable to determine whether a given individual was upper-middle or lower-working class. In one instance, at the Ann Arbor Public Library,

it was impossible to even hazard a guess as to whether one of the males present was an academic or a vagrant.

## CHAPTER III

### STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Strategic decisions have to do with the overall plan for engaging the enemy. Based on information available prior to any actual engagement with the enemy, strategic decisions cover such matters as deployment of troops, size of force, etc. In this chapter, we shall focus on three decisions, all of which are important in modern man's battle for survival in the urban setting.

The first decision has to do with where to engage the enemy or the location of the battle site. The second is concerned with what provisions to take into battle or the matter of materiel. And the third decision deals with the question of how large a force to use, or the group size. Let us consider each of these decisions separately.

#### Battle Site

The decision as to where to engage the enemy is always an important one whether for an army seeking to win a war or for a lone urban dweller seeking to protect his fragile self. The correct choice of battle site can spell the difference between success and failure.

However, neither armies nor urban dwellers are always free to make such decisions. There may be constraints and necessities which take the matter out of the realm of choice. The urban dweller may find it necessary in the course of his daily round to enter any number of setting which, if the matter were entirely

voluntary, he might avoid. Thus the airplane traveler has no choice but to go to the air terminal; the delivery man is constrained to enter the corner bar; the commuter may be unable to by-pass the subway.

There is, unfortunately, no data available on the conditions under which persons will or will not enter given public settings. No one has ever looked at the factors which enter into such decisions, much less attempted to weigh the significance of one factor over another. Any number of interesting questions wait to be explored. To what extent, for example, do a person's perceptions of the "comfort" or lack of it provided by various public settings influence his decision to enter one setting rather than another; as against the influence of such other factors as cost or convenience?<sup>1</sup> Or, to what extent might fear of a public setting override job requirements so that a person might refuse to enter, even at the risk of employment loss?

While it is not possible to answer such questions, it is possible on the basis of what has been said in earlier chapters to hazard two propositions.

First, it is suggested that when faced with a choice between a setting which is perceived to be threatening and one which is not, assuming other factors to be equal, the individual will choose the least threatening. Unless the constraints to do otherwise are particularly compelling, it seems quite reasonable to assume that the individual will avoid any setting in which he anticipates that he will be made to feel anxious.

Second, since differentials in the amount of information concerning a given public setting are extremely important in terms of the extent to which the setting may pose a threat, it is suggested that if the individual is completely free to make a choice between a setting on which he has little information and one on which he has much information (assuming none of the information is such as to encourage avoidance) he will choose the setting about which he knows the most.

#### Materiel

In military parlance, materiel refers to weapons and equipment as differentiated from supplies in general, supplies being consumed, materiel being equipment that is furnished for permanent use. What items a soldier carries with him into battle may be important determinants of how well he fares in that battle. The same is true for the urban dweller, engaged in the fight to protect his fragile self. The materiel of the urban dweller is composed of two classes of items: equipment, or body presentation; and weapons, or props.

Body presentation. As defined in Chapter II, a person's body presentation includes such matters as clothing, grooming and hair style. These, separately and/or in combination, enable others to categorize and thus in some sense, identify the person presenting them. Such identification is possible because, within limits, a society provides guidelines enabling its members to assign meanings both to the various elements of body presentation and to the combinations of these elements. Thus, on the basis of their body presentations, persons

may be placed by others into certain age, sex or class categories.

Knowledge of these socially provided meanings is an important element of intelligence for urban man since it assists him in rendering his environment a more predictable place. But such knowledge is important for another reason. It enables the individual to determine the best possible body presentation for himself prior to his entrance into any given setting. Urban man's primary task in public settings is to handle himself in such a way as to minimize the setting's dangers and maximize the possibilities for self-confirmation. Based on whatever information he possesses about the setting and on his knowledge of body presentation meanings, he can prepare himself so as to increase the possibility that the categorizations to which others are assigning him are the same as those to which he wishes to be assigned. For if the fragile self is to be protected and sustained there must be, to use Gregory Stone's words, "a coincidence of placements and announcements."

One's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces. It is in the coincidence of placements and announcements that identity becomes a meaning of self.<sup>2</sup>

When such placements and announcements do not coincide, identity is not established and the self is threatened. Strategic decisions regarding body presentations are important, then, for they affect the chances that identities will be established, that placements and announcements will coincide.



However, the extent to which body presentation is essential for the establishment of identity depends on what else the individual has available to him which might do the job just as well.

Thus, for example, the not uncommon tendency of some intellectuals to "dress down" (to assume body presentations identified with classes lower than the one to which they belong) is possible because the intellectual possesses other means for establishing identity which are even more effective than body presentation. It does not matter if others mis-identify him; in situations where mis-identification might prove threatening, he has only to speak, demonstrating his vocabulary and pronunciation style, to assert his claim to more self-confirming treatment.<sup>3</sup>

Titles are equally useful in asserting an identity disclaimed by body presentation. Thus, a sloppily dressed academic out shopping may find himself treated with disdain by the store clerks. But disdain changes to deference when, at the time for payment, they are informed that the purchase is to be charged to Dr. \_\_\_\_\_.

And cash on hand is perhaps most useful of all, as the following report suggests.

My mother and father had just returned from Mexico and were visiting me for a few days. On the first evening we decided to eat out and chose one of the city's nicer restaurants. My father was wearing a tie, but in place of a suit coat, he wore a cotton weave jacket he had just purchased in Mexico for about \$2.00. When we entered the restaurant, the maitre d' greeted us suspiciously, then informed my father that he was sorry but gentlemen were not allowed to enter without suit coats. Never one to give in easily, my father replied that his jacket was a

good deal more expensive than the suits being worn by anyone in the place. At the same time he pulled out his wallet, as though to offer his opponent a small bribe, exposing as he did so a rather large number of high denomination bills. We were escorted in immediately and had no further trouble.

It is only when the individual has nothing else to fall back on that body presentation takes on particular importance. A Negro female, for example, on a bus trip to the South, has very little at her disposal with which to assure herself of the respectful treatment she feels she deserves. To many, the very color of her skin will immediately categorize her as being of the lowest strata. She can counter this only with a body presentation suggestive of a more esteemed status. While white-middle-class students, anticipating a bus trip, take no pains with their appearances, she regales herself with perfect grooming, freshly styled hair, stylish silk dress, smartly designed hat, freshly polished shoes and spotless gloves.

The tendency of lower-middle and middle class Negroes to "over dress" so that their appearances suggest caricatures of middle class presentation style, has often been noted. To the extent that this is true, it seems likely that it may be due to the Negro's lack of means, other than body presentation, for establishing his identity.<sup>4</sup>

Props. Part of the materiel which urban man brings with him into the battle are his props. Like the weapons of the soldier, prop(s) are extensions of himself which he uses to assist him in maneuvering in the face of the enemy.

Some props, of course, are merely additional elements of body presentation, as is the book carried by Miss Clarence in one of Shirley Jackson's short stories.

Shw went into Whelan's and sat at the counter, putting her copy of the Villager down on the counter next to her pocketbook and The Charter-house of Parma which she had read enthusiastically up to page fifty and carried now only for effect.<sup>5</sup>  
[Italics added]

But props may also be used to assist in tactical maneuvering as well and it seems likely that they often serve a dual purpose. Middle class types particularly seem to carry with them into public settings an amazing number of accessory items: books, newspapers, notebooks, pens, checkbooks, address books, portfolios, brief cases, nail files, old letters, stationery, and great quantities of cards. Such items are extremely useful in solving the tactical problem of self management. That such items are quite consciously seen as serving a tactical purpose and are brought into the setting for that reason, is nicely pointed up in the following comments of a young woman alone in a city.

I recall that when staying in \_\_\_\_\_, I went down to dinner in the dining room of the hotel and--quite consciously as I remember--armed myself with a crossword puzzle book so as to keep my attention to myself--to encapsulate myself as it were. It seems to me that I have done this often when travelling alone or eating in a restaurant alone, especially when eating alone.

#### Group Size

The third and final strategic decision to be considered concerns the question of how large a force will go into battle, or the matter of the size of the group entering a public setting. This is an important decision

for group size has a great effect on whether or not further maneuvering techniques (tactics) will be needed once the setting has been entered.

In any given setting, when a group is sufficiently large, there is created for the individuals who make it up a protective environment, similar to that enjoyed by patrons, and to an even greater degree by residents. That is, a sufficiently large group provides for its members a kind of "private territory" which they may move about with them from setting to setting. This is possible because a group is (by definition) made up of persons who know one another well and who identify with one another and thus reciprocally insure mutual protection and self-confirmation.

Any need for concern with establishing one's identity to strangers is eliminated. Just as the rural villager, secure in his own territory and surrounded by his own people, cares nothing for the good opinions of persons in surrounding villages (and in fact, may even view a lack of approval on their part as indicative of the superiority of his own group), so too, the members of a group in a public setting may be unconcerned about the responses which his behavior may elicit among strangers in the setting. The group itself provides all the reassurance and support necessary to stave off anxiety.

What constitutes "sufficiently large", however, will vary depending upon a number of other factors such as size of other groups also present, dimensions of the setting itself, or amount of leeway allowed by the setting in what is considered acceptable behavior.

For example, if the others in the setting form a group larger than the one of which the individual is a member, his own group may have little success in shielding him from the setting's dangers. Thus, a group of military prisoners, hand-cuffed together in sub-groups of two or three, enter an airport terminal, suffering from acute embarrassment and humiliation. Heads are lowered, eyes are averted from others in the setting, faces are pale and strained, despite an obvious attempt to act unconcerned. When their three military guards order them to sit, all adjust their postures so as to blot out any view of the handcuffs from all but the nearest or most perceptive observers while the size of the prisoner group was fairly large, the fact that they were quite obviously prisoners, pushed all others in the setting into a group of non-prisoners. The size of the latter group thus greatly exceeded seven. But in a setting where prisoners greatly outnumber non-prisoners, it seems likely that they could successfully support one another and protect themselves from any discomfort. A visitor to a penitentiary, passing among large numbers of prisoners, is apt to feel a good deal more threatened than do they.

Whether a group is "sufficiently large" may also be determined by the actual size or dimensions of the setting into which they enter. A group of five may have a much greater sense of insulation from others in the setting, if the dimensions of the setting are small than if they are large. A giant room tends to shrink even a good sized group into insignificance, as

many a hostess has learned to her sorrow. Thus, groups of three or four, lost in a spacious air terminal, seem to behave a good deal more like lone individuals (i.e. speak more softly, move about less freely, etc.) than do groups of the same size in the more cozy confines of a small bus depot.

Finally, the leeway of behavior permitted by the setting may also affect how large a group is required to create a sense of being in home territory. Only a very large group, for example, would risk loud talk and laughter in a church, while a much smaller group would feel quite free to exhibit similar behavior on a city bus.

Whatever the requisites for "sufficient size", when a group reaches the necessary numbers, its members begin to act in a way that is in stark contrast to the actions of those others in the setting who are alone or with one or two others.

Members of groups tend to exhibit behavior similar to that of residents. They mis-use the setting most freely, so that, for example, a group of adolescents can choose to play running games in an air terminal. They feel free to indulge in backstage behavior, calling each other by name, yelling at one another across the expanse of the setting, using obscene language and laughing loudly at private jokes. And they express proprietary attitudes toward the setting. If their numbers are plentiful enough, they may even force others in the setting to depart, as when the overflow from a convention invades a city's nightspots.

Because members of groups, like residents, and to a lesser degree, patrons, are able to provide themselves with risk-free public settings, they have no need for most of the techniques used by less protected urbanites. We shall therefore not consider them further. Subsequent chapters are concerned with tactics--techniques for maneuvering in the face of the enemy--among those who most need to use them, newcomers and customers, alone or with one or two others of like standing.

## CHAPTER III NOTES

1. Some ecological differences which may influence the extent to which settings are seen as threatening will be discussed in Chapter VII.

2. Stone, Gregory P. "Appearance and the Self", in Arnold M. Rose, ed., Human Behavior and Social Process (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 93.

3. This is probably even more true in British society where class differences are clearly marked by speech differences than in the U.S. where mobility has tended to blur the distinctions.

4. Although in another context, the "conspicuous consumption" of the nouveau riche might be accounted for in a similar way.

5. Jackson, Shirley, "The Villager" in The Lottery (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 40. For a discussion of the identification of "props with class standing, see Goffman, Erving, "Symbols of Class Status", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 2 (December, 1951), 294-304.



PART TWO: TACTICS OF PERSONAL DEFENSE  
IN PUBLIC SETTINGS

CHAPTER IV  
SELF MANAGEMENT

To recapitulate, I am suggesting that the fundamental task faced by modern man in the urban public setting is that of minimizing the setting's dangers and maximizing his chances for self-confirmation. Preparations for this task begin before the setting is entered through the accumulation of intelligence and through the formulation of strategic decisions.

We come now to the moment of truth, the time when preparation is past and confrontation must commence.

We shall watch man as he actually maneuvers in the face of the enemy and no longer be interested in those for whom the settings hold little or no danger, patrons and residents and members of groups. Our interest is, rather, in those who must face the enemy alone or with only one or two others. These are the newcomers and customers, people who have no protection except their own grasp of and skills with the techniques of battle.

Keeping in mind the typical behavior of residents, group members and, to a lesser degree, patrons--their extensive mis-use of settings, their indulgence in backstage behavior, their attitudes of proprietary rights--

it will become increasingly clear how greatly different is the behavior of their less protected fellows. Newcomers and customers are much too busy protecting themselves to be able to relax. Their task is complex.

They must constantly project the image of themselves which they wish confirmed; they must avoid contact with potentially dangerous strangers as much as possible. If contact is essential-- either of a non-verbal or verbal nature--they must assess the others carefully, guiding their behavior so as to minimize the risk. Should threatening errors occur, they must correct them as quickly and auspiciously as possible.

None of the tactics to be discussed is concerned with one aspect of this complex task to the exclusion of any other. Each maneuvering technique is part of the total effort. Nevertheless, it is helpful for reasons of analysis to divide these tactics into two types: those used primarily in the task of projecting a favorable and confirmable image, or self management; and those concerned primarily with the task of dealing with strangers, or contact management.

In this chapter we shall focus on the first of these types. Chapter V will examine the second. In Chapter VI, the problem of tactical errors will be discussed, and finally, in Chapter VII, we shall briefly consider some of the variations in physical arrangements of public settings and the effect of these ecological differences on potentials for danger and necessities for tactics.

It must be emphasized again that the distinction between management of self and management of contact is essentially an artificial one. The problem of self-management is an important aspect of any contact with others; and contact management is necessary only

because of a concern with projecting the most favorable image.

\* \* \*

Tactics of self management may themselves be divided in terms of the time during the "battle sequence" in which they are put to use. The first sub-set of self management tactics are utilized in the moments just prior to and during the individual's entrance into and establishment of a position in the setting. These are the tactics for approaching the enemy. The second sub-set comes into play once the individual has established his initial position and continues in use as long as he is in the midst of the enemy. Each sub-type will be considered separately and in turn.

#### Approaching the Enemy

The job of self management during the period of entrance--while approaching the enemy--is a challenging one. The enemy has the advantage. He is already present, has already secured a position, and is free to take note of any and all new arrivals. Because of this the individual making his entrance cannot count on doing so unobserved. He must assume that whatever presentation he assumes will be seen and used as a basis for judging him. He must manage the difficult maneuver of getting into the setting and securing a position in such a way as to leave no doubt in the minds of his enemies that here is an adequate, worthy and legitimate human being. Let us examine, step by step, some techniques by which this maneuver may be accomplished.

Checking For Readiness. During the very few seconds immediately before and immediately after entering the setting, the individual takes some precautions to insure a flawless approach. He checks out and, if necessary, rearranges his body presentation to make certain nothing in his appearance will jar the image he wishes to convey. And, should such be required, he takes care of any last-minute physical needs, the satisfying of which would not be considered correct public behavior. That is, he spends a few seconds on "backstage behavior" so as to be prepared for the ensuing "on stage" situation.

Very often body presentation checks and repairs involve no more than making certain one's hair is appropriately arranged, as in the following examples.

A young male approaches the door. He carries a brief case in one hand, the other hangs free. As he nears the door, he uses his free hand to brush the hair back from his forehead, then opens the door with that hand and enters.

Two girls come toward the entrance. About three yards from the door, each begins to pass her hand over her hair, as though brushing it. They continue this until they reach the door. Apparently unfinished, they stop for a few seconds in front of the door while continuing the process.

Men often do little more than pat their heads, as though assuring themselves that no wayward hairs will be standing stright up.

When, as is often the case, the setting entrance contains a plate glass door, the door forms a mirror which may then be used to check parts of the body not otherwise visible. Thus:

A young woman nears the door. When she reaches it she stops for a moment, lowers her head, raising her eyes so that the top of her head

is visible to her in the glass. She examines this view for a second, then raises her head again and moves inside.

On occasion, the individual may feel a more thorough check and repair is in order, as apparently did the two young men described below.

A young male is coming down the path toward the door. He is carrying nothing, both arms swing freely at his sides. As he comes within a few yards of the door, he puts one hand up to his shirt pocket, rearranging the pencils which he carries within. Then with both hands he pulls at his belt. Finally, just before entering, he uses one hand to wipe quickly at his hair.

A young male is almost to the door. He stops, grabs at the center of his belt with both hands and pulls up on his trousers, glances down briefly in the direction of his zipper, and just as he passes through the entrance, he pushes on the bridge of his glasses with one finger.

Last minute physical needs are also satisfied during these few seconds. Thus persons may be observed coughing, yawning, sniffing, blowing and scratching just before coming into the full view of the occupants of the setting.<sup>1</sup>

It must be understood that such last minute preparations occupy only a brief period of time and during this time the individual is usually not entirely out of the sight of others.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons the check is necessarily superficial and if major repairs should be required, they must either be postponed or made within the view of whatever persons happen to be present. But even in such cases, and certainly with most routine preparation, it is apparently preferable to be witnessed by a few strangers at the entrance in a brief episode of backstage behavior than to be caught by the many strangers inside with one's "presentation down".

Taking a Reading. Either at the same time or immediately after the check for readiness, the individual takes the next step in his approach maneuver. He takes a reading of the setting. That is, he familiarizes himself with its physical layout. This is important, for it makes possible the final step of the approach maneuver: reaching a position.

Coming into a setting with which one is unfamiliar is confusing. The individual is barraged by a sudden mass of visual and audial stimuli. If he is to take a position within the setting without casting doubt on the image of adequacy, worthy and legitimacy he wishes to project, he must avoid such errors as walking into walls, tripping over furniture or opening broom closet doors. And to avoid such errors, he must somehow organize the barrage of incoming stimuli into a fairly clear picture of the arrangement of the setting.

As seen in Chapter II, customers have a distinct advantage over newcomers in this step of the maneuver. Having been in the setting on a previous occasion, they already know its physical features. Nevertheless, they are not entirely free of the necessity to take a reading. The arrangements of a setting do change: furniture is moved, facilities are re-located, and particularly in depots and terminals, luggage may litter the floor space--the exact placement of which no customer can know beforehand.

Most Americans seem to feel constrained to take readings as quickly as possible and to do so in such a

way as to suggest that they are not doing so. One might think that under the barrage of masses of new stimuli, the most sensible procedure would be to pause for a few moments just inside the setting in order to most adequately and efficiently assess the physical layout. But such frank, unabashed assessments are rarely observed. To prolong the period in which one is in view of all those already settled within the setting is to prolong the period of disadvantage. The approach maneuver is difficult and dangerous enough (since during it the individual is in the "spotlight" as it were) even at its briefest; to prolong it is to prolong a period where the slightest error is visible to the largest number.<sup>3</sup>

Readings may be taken in various ways. Whether individuals develop a reading style and then use it in all settings regardless of ecological differences or whether an individual's style may vary from setting to setting is not known. Nor is it known what factors other than purely idiosyncratic ones may account for observed variations within the same setting. It is suggested that in the latter instance, two factors--variations in perceived threat and variations in available props--may be important. How these factors operate or what others may also be important remains a mystery.

The most common reading style observed is also the quickest. The individual enters and moves rapidly into the setting without a pause, but during his first few seconds within the setting, moves his eyes rapidly, covering everything within range. Sometimes this is done without moving the head. The entire body, head



included, is fully directed into the setting, as though the individual were following a tunnel running right through the middle of the setting. Only the eyes move, darting quickly from side to side, then straight ahead, then to the side. More often, the body remains straight, but the head is allowed to turn. Even here, the movement is swift. Once the eye has focused and taken in an object or area, it loses focus almost immediately and darts in another direction. The head cannot move as quickly as the eye, but within a few seconds after the eye has unfocused, it too shifts position.<sup>4</sup> Only rarely does the entire body move from side to side, following the head and eyes and when it does, the movement is very slight.

A second reading style is somewhat slower, utilizing as it does a kind of "delaying tactic." This involves a minute pause, necessitated by some small task in which the individual engages himself; the pause providing the individual with a few additional seconds within which to assess his surroundings. Thus we may observe persons pausing briefly, just inside an entrance, to remove gloves, reach for a cigarette, take off sun glasses, transfer a purse from one arm to another, retrieve change from a pocket or, if the outside weather is chill, shiver for a moment as though to shake off the cold.<sup>5</sup>

A third style involves stimuli restriction. Rather than trying to take in the entire setting at one time, the individual restricts himself to only one section of the approach area, guiding himself through this section until he has reached a position. Sometimes this involves

taking a reading only of the floor area. In this case, the head and eyes are cast down from the moment of entrance, the individual sees the setting only as floor space, legs and shoes, and makes his way toward a position ignoring all other aspects of the setting. More often, stimuli restriction involves concentration on one side of a setting. Here the individual takes a reading only of the area which adjoins the wall or rim of the setting. The opposite side of the depot, park, or whatever, is ignored until he has reached a position. Thus an individual using this reading style may enter a bus depot, immediately look to the left, take in the booths and lunch counter contained in that section, and never averting his eyes to glance at the area to his right, follow the lunch counter section all the way through the approach area.

There is, finally, a fourth possibility: the individual may avoid taking a reading at all. This may be accomplished in a variety of ways. First, if there are two persons entering together, one ahead of the other, the second in line may rely on his companion to assess the situation and simply follow wherever he goes. When this occurs, one may observe a kind of "follow the leader" dance, with the second persons repeating the body movements of the first in an almost stylized fashion. Second, the individual may avoid a reading by simply keeping his head turned in the direction from which he came, rather than in the direction toward which he is

going. This is a particularly interesting tactic because it is both dangerous and threat-reducing at the same time. It is dangerous because by not looking where he is going, the individual risks flawing his approach with bumps, stumbles and trips. But it is threat-reducing because he avoids viewing others view his entrance. By the time his head turns into the setting, the entrance is an accomplished fact. It seems possible that the gain overrides the risk of such entrances because those watching will assume that anyone behaving in such an extraordinary fashion must surely be engrossed in something of legitimate interest and importance. As such, any awkward slips in the approach may be readily understood and forgiven. This is a relatively common ploy when three persons are entering together. The lead person turns at the moment of entrance so as to face his companions and literally backs into the setting. Presumably in such situations, one's companions, who are looking forward, can be relied upon to provide warnings of any imminent disasters. However, it is not unusual to observe a lone individual employ the same tactic, maintaining his gaze from the moment of entrance until he is well within the setting on the area he has just passed through.

Reaching a Position. The final step of the approach maneuver is to reach a position, to secure a stopping place or attain a goal. Thus, the approach maneuver may be said to be complete when the individual takes a seat in a booth,

reaches a ticket window, jumps into a pool, stops in front of a cigarette machine, and so on.

Persons who avoid taking a reading at <sup>all</sup>  $\Delta$  may be said to have reached a position whenever they come to a halt; or in the case of those backing in, whenever they turn around. They are by this time far enough into the setting so that they may simply stop and stand without being conspicuous. The "spotlight" is off once the approach has been completed, although the length of the approach area will vary from setting to setting.

Those who take a "restricted" reading may reach a position simply by following the area they have chosen to observe, as we have seen above. The initial reading, although limited, yields enough information to enable them to move toward a position with relative ease.

For persons taking a full reading, whether quickly or utilizing a delaying tactic, there are a number of alternative methods by which a position may be reached.

They may, after seeing the various alternatives, opt for the restricted tactic noted above and simply follow one side of the setting until they have reached a satisfactory stopping place. When the setting is a particularly complex one, involving a jumble of people and/or objects, this is probably one of the least difficult and least dangerous methods for completing the approach maneuver.

However, the individual may have spotted the exact position site he wishes to take during the initial reading--quite possible if the setting is not too large, complex or crowded. In such a case, he may use what

may be called a "beeline tactic." With eyes focused on the desired site, he moves straight toward it, rapidly, purposefully, turning neither his body, head nor eyes in any other direction. Presumably, such single-minded concentration eases some of the difficulties of the approach, in much the same way that the restricted and back-in tactics do. First, the individual cuts off some of the incoming stimuli, thus avoiding confusing distractions and reaches his position in record time. Second, by focusing continually on the position site, he prevents himself from taking much notice of those around him and avoids any full realization of the numbers of strangers who are looking at him.<sup>6</sup>

Similar to the beeline tactic (and possessed of the same advantages) is the "object concentration tactic." Here, during the initial reading, the individual ascertains the general direction or the exact location of the position he wishes to attain. But rather than focusing on that spot, he chooses some object in the general direction of his destination and lavishes his attention on that. Thus a large wall clock, just above and to the side of a door toward which he is headed, may receive his gaze all the way through the approach. This is a particularly useful method, if the setting is not excessively crowded so that one does not have to be so careful about keeping an eye on the path ahead. When the setting is large, and the distance to the position great, the object of focus may change. During the first lap of the journey, a display board may serve; once that is passed, the gaze may shift to a wall mural; then finally to a row of

chairs.

In some situations, both the "beeline" and "object concentration" tactics may be modified. If the desired position is somewhat beyond the approach area, as is often the case when large numbers of people are present, the riveted gaze may be relaxed somewhat after one has achieved a more crowded (and thus less exposed) section of the setting. Here, there is an alternating of gaze from the object or site to one side, then the other. But even here the side looks are brief, the first focus of attention continues to be the main one.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the tactic for reaching it, the securing of a position signals the beginning of a new phase in the self-management problem and ushers in a new set of tactics for dealing with it.

Once the position has been reached, the individual is able to take a more frank appraisal of the setting, noting much that he had either not seen before or had only glanced at in passing. And from the relative security of his position, he begins to assume the "battle style" which will represent the primary self-management maneuver to be used in the midst of the enemy.<sup>8</sup>

#### In the Midst of the Enemy; Battle Styles

The period of approach is a very brief one. While it is in process, the individual is primarily concerned with projecting himself only as someone who can successfully execute this maneuver. There is time for little else. It is not until after he has reached a position and is faced with a prolonged stay in the midst of the enemy that it becomes important--or even possible--for

him to assume his more individualistic and complex battle style. His overriding concern continues to be that of projecting a favorable and confirmable image, but with more time now at his disposal, this projection will involve a greater range of behavior and will reflect more individual differences than was possible during the approach.

Since all newcomers and customers in public places face the same basic problem of self management<sup>9</sup>, it is to be expected that their individual battle styles might exhibit a number of common characteristics. With the exception of mavericks (discussed below), this, indeed, appears to be the case.

Among those who are alone, two characteristics seem almost universal. The first involves facial expression, or more precisely the lack thereof. Unaccompanied persons in public settings exhibit an almost completely impassive face to those who care to look. They appear neither happy nor sad, angry nor peaceful. Their body language may express interest or concentration or casualness or any number of other attitudes, but the face registers nothing. Persons who read in public settings rarely display their reaction to the words before them. Only occasionally does even a fleeting smile play across their lips. Even more rarely, does one observe an apparent struggle to choke down a burst of laughter. Once the laugh is stilled the face returns to its prior impassive state.<sup>10</sup>

Second, persons alone in public settings, tend to be to a greater or lesser degree task oriented. There are,

of course, wide variations in this because of the differing functions of public settings<sup>s</sup> such as libraries and theaters which have built-in expectations of task orientation. But even in settings where no particular task is expected, such as bus depots, air terminals and parks, one often finds people occupied with one or another small task.

Among those in groups of two or three, an additional characteristic may be observed. With rare exceptions, conversational tones are kept at a low level. In contrast to the members of protective groups (as well as residents and perhaps patrons) members of dyads and triads rarely yell at one another from across a room or talk loudly when together.

Aside from these shared characteristics, battle styles exhibit a range of individual differences. This too is to be expected. Conceptions of self differ; it would be surprising if presentation styles did not. In addition, there are probably individual variations in the extent to which any given setting is perceived as dangerous. Thus, bars are usually sites of considerable danger for unescorted females and are considerably less dangerous for unescorted males. It can be expected, therefore, that battle styles will vary according to the degree of protection deemed necessary.

Even though battle styles<sup>s</sup> differ among different individuals, their range is not infinite and it is possible to observe some main patterns or types. We shall look at five of these battle styles (or more precisely, four, plus a category of persons who seem



to lack them altogether--the mavericks). Before doing so, a few qualifications are necessary.

First, these styles represent "ideal types" or typifications of behavior patterns which contain reality but are not found fully in given instances of their respective occurrences. They are composite portraits. Although no actual battle style will exhibit all the characteristics of the portrait, each will approximate one or another type; some more closely, some, less closely.

Second, these five are not exhaustive of the full range of possibilities. They are based primarily on observations of people in non-task oriented settings, specifically, waiting settings. Such a basis is selective and less than representative. This type of setting, however, has its advantages. The setting itself places only broad, general restrictions on how the waiting time may be spent. There is considerable opportunity, therefore, for individual styles to be expressed and observed. While it seems quite likely that persons in theaters, for example, exhibit differences in how they handle self-presentation (through sitting postures, gestures, etc.) the highly specific task oriented character of such a setting restricts both the extent to which such differences may be expressed and the ease with which such differences may be observed. A waiting area, is a kind of "fishbowl" in which battle styles obscured in other settings may operate fully and be seen clearly.

Third, the exact extent to which any given individual's battle style may vary from setting to setting

is not known. Certainly, it is to be expected that variations will occur, depending, perhaps, on degree of perceived threat. How radical these variations may be, or what factors other than degree of perceived threat may account for them, are questions unanswered at present.

With these qualifications in mind, let us turn to the styles themselves. The order of their presentation is based upon the amount of behavioral expression each style allows--from the most to the least restricted. The degree of each styles restrictiveness appears to be a function of the extent to which the person exhibiting the style perceives the setting as more or less dangerous and himself in more or less need of protection. We begin with the most restricted, and thus most protective style--that of the "sweet young thing" and end with the style that is so unrestricted and so unprotective as to be no style at all--that of the "maverick".

The Sweet Young Thing. The most restricted and protective of battle styles is used primarily, as the name suggests, by females, ranging in age from late teens to mid-30's. That the female urbanite should feel a need for the most protective style is understandable. Women in American society are thought to be subject to sexual advances in public settings and girls are taught from an early age to beware of strange men. Our folk tales abound with stories of dangers that may befall the woman alone. Young women particularly, as the most prized of sexual objects and the most inexperienced in the ways of "city life" are thought to be in greatest peril.

The battle style of the "Sweet Young Thing" involves very little movement. Having once taken a position, usually a seated one, she rarely leaves it. Her posture is straight, potentially suggestive or revealing "slouching" is not dared. She crosses her legs or her ankles but takes great care to see that no more of her is showing than current standards of good taste allow.

She inevitably has a book or magazine in her possession and this is drawn from her coat or handbag the moment she has settled herself in a position. The book or magazine is never closely read; to become engrossed is to risk losing awareness and control of one's posture. In addition, it is essential to be on a constant lookout for any approaching danger. But while reading material receives little close attention, it is always conspicuously present, either laying on the lap or held out from the body with one hand, about midway between the lap and the face. Such a prop serves to demonstrate that she is tending to her own affairs, not on the prowl for strange males and not the type of young lady who would invite attention by boldly staring about. While she does gaze at her surroundings, her glances are usually short and casual, risking no eye contact. On the occasions when she allows herself to simply stare, she makes certain her eyes are turned toward the floor, chair, wall, potted plant, or any other inanimate object.

Should the occasion arise when she must leave her position and move to another location, she does so purposefully, in a business-like, no-nonsense way. She does not "stroll" from one part of the setting to another.

Having first carefully planned her move, she proceeds with all deliberate speed to her new destination.

The Nester. The "Nester" style derives its name from the main activity engaged in by those who use it. Having once established a position, such persons busy themselves with arranging and re-arranging their props, much in the manner of a bird building and occupying a nest. The following anecdote is an apt illustration.

Mrs. B. of our church parish always came to Mass with an incredible number of small items in her possession. We seemed always to be seated in the pew just behind her so that before services began we had a very clear view of her activity. Having entered the pew, she first knelt for a few minutes in prayer, then sat back, opened her purse and began pulling out various items. First came the missal which she looked over carefully, opened and marked for the day's service, and then laid to one side. Next came her rosary, carefully taken from its tiny box and placed in a convenient pocket for later use. Then the collection envelope was drawn forth, examined closely and finally placed between the pages of the missal. If it were a warm day, she would remove her coat, taking great care to fold it just so and place it next to her. Her hat needed re-arranging quite often too, and she spent quite a bit of time removing and replacing hat pins. She invariably went to the altar to light a candle, necessitating an inspection of her change purse and often a bit of housekeeping in the handbag itself. When she had lit the candle and returned to her pew, she seemed always to find that things had been disarranged or were not as propitiously placed as she might wish, and the whole process would begin again. It was said in our parish that Mass could not begin until Mrs. B. had finished building her nest.

Like Mrs. B., Nesters in public settings are possessed of an amazing number of items of personal property and they spend most of their time in the setting caring for them.

Nesters are primarily young middle class men and middle aged women. Whatever the sex, they are always very neat in appearance and their body presentations suggest middle

class standing.

The Nester is somewhat less restricted in his movements than is the Sweet Young Thing, although like her, having once secured a position, he rarely leaves it. Indeed, he is really much too busy to do so. However, unlike the Sweet Young Thing, the Nester is not confined to one rigid posture. In fact, his duties require that he have considerable freedom of body movement within the confines of his position.

Sometimes the Nester's possessions, though numerous, are small in size, as is the case with the young man described below who was able to carry them all in his pocket, a small brief case and a paper sack.

A young man, mid-20's, sits down on one of the benches in the bus depot. He places a brief case, which he had carried under his arm, on his lap and opens it. He withdraws several small pieces of paper, examining each with some intensity, then returns them to the case. He stands up slightly so as to pull some coins from his pants pocket, then sits again and counts the money several times before returning it to the pocket. Now he takes a check book from the brief case and spends a few minutes bringing the check register up to date. The checkbook is returned to the case and a spiral notebook is withdrawn. He begins writing, but this too lasts only a few minutes. Then the notebook is replaced, the brief case closed and a paper sack is set neatly on top of it. In a few seconds, the paper sack is removed, the brief case reopened and a packet of letter sized paper is withdrawn. He glances through these, returns them, and then in rapid succession, pulls out and returns a newspaper, book, brochure and letter size envelope.

On other occasions, the Nester may be kept busy looking after items of a much bulkier nature. In such cases, there is a good deal more standing up and sitting down, lifting and juggling, than in the situation illustrated above. Witness the activity of a middle

class woman in her late forties or early fifties.

A yellow convertible stops outside the bus depot and a woman emerges. She makes several trips from the car to the locker area, finally places a number of items in one of the lockers and leaves. About a half hour later she returns, her arms laden with additional packages. She sets them on a bench, goes to the lockers, retrieves what has been placed inside and brings these things to the bench as well. Her possessions now include two dress boxes, a hat box, a suitcase, a purse, a paper sack and a raincoat on a hanger, protected by a plastic cover. She sits down next to this stack and begins to arrange them. The suitcase is placed on the floor, dress boxes on top, the raincoat is laid across the back of the bench. Her purse and the paper sack are placed next to her. She surveys this handiwork and apparently dissatisfied, begins to re-arrange it. This arranging and re-arranging continues for fifteen minutes until a bus is called and she transports all her gear, in several trips, out to the loading area.

Should the Nester be required to forsake his position temporarily, he does so only after making certain that everything is in place (if he cannot take it all with him). Even if he must leave some things behind, he does not move to his new destination empty-handed, but carries some item, such as a brief case, with him. During the passage, he continues his work, looking through or tidying up whatever item he was able to bring along. Once returned to the initial position, he inevitably finds that the props left behind need to be re-arranged once more.

This absorption with props functions to increase the Nester's protection. First, it keeps his eyes occupied so that he does not have to be concerned with eye contact (a type of contact which strangers take great pains to avoid).<sup>11</sup> Second, his busyness suggests to those around him that here is a person who has many

important things to do and is therefore not a person with whom one should attempt any verbal interaction. Under some conditions interaction between certain strangers in public settings is not taboo.<sup>12</sup> But the Nester, wishing to avoid all interaction, legitimate or not, presents himself so as to discourage any interactional opening.

The Investigator. Less confining in body movement, than either of the previous battle styles, the Investigator stance nevertheless protects those who utilize it from eye contact and undesired interaction. Investigators, (primarily mature--late 30's or older--middle and lower middle class or working class males) are quite as absorbed and thus unapproachable as Nesters. But unlike Nesters, the objects of their absorption are not personal props but the various facilities of the setting itself.

Having first reached a position, the Investigator surveys his surroundings with some care. Then, having done this, he leaves his position to begin a minute investigation of every inanimate object in sight. Occasionally he returns to his initial position or establishes a new one, but most of his time is spent moving about. The Investigator is at his best, of course, if the setting is large and complex and presents a wide array of items for him to look at. But if the setting contains no such "lush growth" he remains undaunted. A truly skilled Investigator can spend five minutes gazing at a sign which contains only three words. Let us follow one Investigator as he moves about a small but well supplied bus depot.

A middle or lower middle class male, early 40's, is wandering about. He spends a few moments standing in front of a small-gift vending machine, looking at the display of available items, then sits down on the bench across from the machine to continue his investigation. He rises, goes up the stairs to the rest room, stopping en route to look at the various signs which adorn the walls. Leaving the restroom, he moves to the front of the depot, taking note of the menus on the wall behind the lunch counter. Now he comes further into the depot again, stops in front of a medal making machine and proceeds to read all the instructions printed on it. He comes back even further, now gazes at a sign urging travelers to tag their luggage. Leaving this spot, he moves to a Diners Club display--a desk-like arrangement with a sign asking people to fill out applications for a Diners Club card. There is a place on the desk apparently designed to hold applications but it is empty. He remains in front of the desk for about three minutes, then goes back to the gift machine which once again receives his studied attention. Now he goes out the side exit and looks at the busses parked in the runway, comes back in, stands gazing out the window to the runway. Leaving this location, he goes to the rear exit, looks out at the parking lot for some five minutes. Coming back into the middle of the depot, he examines a coke machine and the photo booth situated next to it, then sits down at the bench facing these two items and continues his examination. He rises after a few minutes and goes over to the phone booths, spends about four minutes looking through the telephone directory.

The Investigator will continue this kind of movement during the entire time he is in the setting. When he leaves he will have given a few moments of undivided attention to every machine, phone booth, sign, clock, window, door, chair, ash tray, water fountain and newspaper stand in the place.

The Seasoned Urbanite. Of the conventional or non-deviant battle styles, that of the Seasoned Urbanite is the least restricted and thus least protective. It is used, as might be expected, primarily by persons who



by reason of age and/or long experience in public settings, feel they have little to fear. As such, the behavior of the Seasoned Urbanite begins to approach that of the resident, patron or group member in its ease and apparent relaxed character. But unlike the resident, patron or group member, the Seasoned Urbanite neither misuses the setting, displays backstage behavior nor manifests proprietary attitudes. He is easy and relaxed only within the confines of legitimate setting use and proper public behavior.

The Seasoned Urbanite may be either male or female. If male, he tends to be in his late forties or fifties; if female, somewhat older. Male users of this style seem to be equally represented by middle or working class types, but among females, the working class predominates.

The Seasoned Urbanite is confined to no fixed position, body posture or task involvement. Should he be reading, he does so as though truly engrossed, settling himself comfortably in his chair, often sliding down, spreading his legs out before him and resting his head against the chair back. He may involve himself with personal props but for shorter periods of time and with less absorption than does the Nester. He moves about the setting easily, may glance at the various signs or displays but with considerably less interest than is shown by the Investigator.

The main protection of the Seasoned Urbanite is age which, particularly for females, reduces the chances for any sexual advances; and long experience in public settings which assures him of the knowledge and skills

necessary to handle any difficulties. Seasoned Urbanites, particularly females, sometimes even open themselves to verbal interaction with strangers, secure in their ability to judge others accurately on the basis of body presentation and body language alone.

The Maverick. This final battle style is actually a non-style and its users are those who either do not know how, are not able, or do not care to protect themselves in public settings. Mavericks are likely to draw what for conventional others would be considered threatening attention; they make spectacles of themselves as persons who possess inadequate, unworthy or illegitimate selves. Those who observe them, disturbed by their apparent lack of respect for proper presentation, avoid them as much as possible; but Mavericks do not play by the rules and will often force themselves into interaction with unwilling strangers.

There are three types of persons who may be said to be Mavericks: children, or those with insufficiently developed selves; the constantly stigmatized, or those with spoiled selves; and eccentrics, or those with irresponsible selves.

Children are notoriously unconcerned with presenting a favorable and confirmable image for themselves and they are equally unconcerned with whether others do so.

When quite young they think nothing of removing their clothing and exposing their most private parts to all who may wish to look. Body functions are handled quite matter of factly, with no consideration of the necessity to keep secret matters secret. Proper body

handling is equally ignored and children show not the least shame over stumbling, falling down, bumping into others, or any other equally horrendous error.

Nor do children respect the bodies of others, staring unabashedly at any and all who attract their notice. They comment freely on the appearances of others, are often so bold as to initiate body contact with complete strangers.

Children will mis-use the facilities of a public setting to whatever extent they can "get away with", and are often to be seen removing groceries from supermarket shelves, or climbing over photo booths and water fountains.

Even older children--teenagers--socialized out of the more glaring mis-behavior of their younger days, when in the presence of one other peer, think nothing of calling attention to themselves in public settings by giggling, laughing and shouting.

The constantly stigmatized fails to project an acceptable and protective battle style, not because he is incompletely socialized, but because some highly visible deformity of face and/or figure prevents him from doing so. His very presence in a public setting makes him the center of unfavorable notice. Spastics, or persons afflicted with Cerebral Palsy or similar diseases are prime examples.

The spastic cannot assume a protective battle style because his lack of muscular control makes it impossible for him to behave as proper American adults are expected

to behave, no matter how much he may wish to do so. As we have seen, self-management, both during the approach maneuver and while in the midst of the enemy, requires a great deal of physical discipline: the urbanite must control his body, his eyes, his head, his hands, his movements. But the spastic can do none of these things, or can do them only very poorly.

To normals within the setting, the spastic's very presence is an affront, and whenever possible, they will avoid contact and interaction, as in the following example.

A large group has gathered in a hall connecting two University buildings to listen to and argue with the anti-Vietnam war speakers. There are heated exchanges and as the voices grow louder, more people join the crowd. A young man, a spastic, has just entered the hall and is standing quietly, listening to the speaker. Suddenly he becomes animated, rushes forward, losing more and more control of his limbs as he does so. He flails his arms, trying to attract the attention of the main speaker. He begins to talk, he is angry, but the words come out slurred and indistinct. He struggles to make himself understood, but succeeds only in becoming more excited and more uncontrolled. His head rolls against his shoulder, his legs bow, his arms move in all directions, his eyes dart to and fro. The crowd, so noisy before, is hushed. Eyes turn from him and people begin to leave, slowly at first, then with increasing momentum until only a few persons remain. Newcomers stop for a moment to listen, but unlike those before them, do not remain for more than a few seconds. He watches the crowd disperse, pleads for them to listen, lurches toward those nearest him as though to prevent their leaving. Finally, after completing his argument with the speaker, he himself leaves. A young co-ed greets an incoming friend a moment later, tells her of the incident and expresses her view that the entire episode was vulgar and grotesque.

The eccentric fails to present a proper battle style because he is too preoccupied with his own thoughts to be aware that one is required. As such, eccentrics present a particular problem to conventional others. They are so unconcerned with an/or insensitive to the responses of others that they are immune to sanctions which might socialize them, as with children; or to sanctions which might shame them, as with the constantly stigmatized.

Eccentrics show no concern for body presentation, appearing in public in the most outlandish of outfits. Nor do they appear concerned that their behavior may attract undue attention. They often mis-use the setting quite openly and without any apparent awareness that they are doing so. Since they are unresponsive to sanctions, they are unpredictable and present a greater threat to the protection of the self than does any other stranger in a public setting. We shall be meeting a number of eccentrics in the following chapter, for they are of particular concern in the tactical problem of contact management. For now, a single example will suffice to acquaint the reader with the eccentric's style--or lack of it.

A very tall young male enters a bus depot. He is bearded, his hair is dark and long and rather kinky and it seems to stick out in all directions. He is wearing a green wool "logger" shirt, with a white shirt beneath it and wool slacks in a gray plaid design. He is moving all around the depot with great speed, rushing from one section to another, as though he had a specific destination in mind and were in a great hurry to reach it. He goes to the water fountain, then to the Diner's Club display, back to the water fountain, takes a drink, turns on his heels, heads up

toward the rest rooms three stairs at a time. Still rushing, he comes back down, out the side exit, back in and out the rear exit. A few seconds later he reappears, this time hurrying through the front door, comes all the way into the depot and out the side exit again. Again he reappears at the front entrance, rushes through the depot until he reaches a bench, plops down, leans back his head and heaves a loud sigh. Now up again and out the side exit, in the front door and back into the depot, reaches the side exit, whirls around, takes two steps away from the door, whirls again and goes out. Returns a second later through the same door, strides rapidly to the front, out the entrance and disappears.

\* \* \*

Having examined the tactics of self management, both during the approach to the enemy and in his midst, we turn now to those tactics designed to cope with another aspect of the problem of maneuvering in the face of the enemy, that of managing contact with strangers.

## CHAPTER IV NOTES

1. The reader may question whether the various gestures and body movements described in this section might not be merely idiosyncratic and irrelevant to any general understanding of persons in public settings. If this were the case, however, we should expect such acts to be distributed randomly through time. This does not appear to be the case. In one observation site (The Fishbowl, see appendix) it was possible to begin observing persons while they were still at a considerable distance from the setting entrance. The gestures and body movements in question did not commence until persons had come within a few yards of the entrance. The behavior called readiness checking almost invariably occurred between this point and a point a few feet inside the door. Very few gestures and body movements of this type were observed outside this area, on either side.

2. There are exceptions to this, of course. Sometimes entrances are designed in such a way as to afford the individual at least a modicum of privacy. Thus, a woman leaving a darkened theater may yank at her girdle just before stepping out into the light. In most settings, however, readiness checks must be performed within the view of at least a few others. The importance of ecological arrangements in the performance of these tactics is discussed in Ch. VII.

3. Residents and members of protective groups demonstrate their lack of fear of the setting most clearly during the period of the approach. Both types are often observed

standing just inside the entrance for a prolonged period of time, gazing about frankly and with apparent calm. Ecological differences may also greatly affect the difficulties involved in taking a reading. (See Ch. VII).

4. The writer was able to gather this data because of the remarkable ability of human beings to determine whether an eye--looking in their direction--is focused or not.

[See, for example, James J. Gibson and Ann D. Peck, "Perception of Another Person's Looking Behavior", American Journal of Psychology, Vol. 76 (September, 1963) 386-94; and Michael Argyle and Janel Dean, "Eye-Contact, Distance and Affiliation", Sociometry, Vol. 28 (September, 1965) 289-304]. Some of the implication of this ability will be discussed in Chapter V under contact management--non verbal.

5. It is not suggested that such delaying tactics are necessarily deliberate. It is quite understandable that for purposes of physical comfort one might wish to remove his gloves upon entering an indoor setting. But whether deliberate or not, such acts do result in a delay in the approach process and thus in an opportunity to take a fairly complete reading.

6. It seems quite likely that often urban man greatly overestimates the number of persons who are paying the slightest attention to him. Nevertheless his concern over his image and presentation style is not unjustified-- either during the period of approach or later. Some people most certainly will be watching him and should he make an error, a good many more will be.



7. Frank gazing about while moving through a setting approach is rare, at least for newcomers or customers. I have observed it on only a few occasions and mostly in persons who were setting residents or members of a large group. However, some settings are designed such that the persons already present have their backs to those making an entrance. Other settings<sup>s</sup> because of design and function, offer little opportunity for those within to get any clear view of the setting's entrance. In such cases, the need for an elaborate approach maneuver is greatly minimized, if not eliminated. See Chapter VII.

8. For a graphic illustration of the kind of tactics involved in the approach maneuver, in fact in all phases of initial contact between strangers, I recommend a viewing of the delightful 1952 French film, Mr. Hulot's Holiday. Jacques Tati's portrayal of Mr. Hulot is a masterful characterization of a man desperately trying to project himself as capable, urbane and sophisticated, but hopelessly inept at doing so. Through an exaggeration of this ineptness, the film illustrates beautifully the kinds of self-projecting gyrations we all go through, if usually with a bit more success than Mr. Hulot. One particularly pertinent scene (for the problem of setting approach), involves Mr. Hulot's entrance into the lobby of the small resort hotel where he will spend his holiday. All of the persons in the lobby have achieved "positions". He is a stranger to them all and the focus of all eyes as he comes in the door. In his attempt to get from the door to the desk to the

stairs, he demonstrates, with great exaggeration (but, I think, with equally great accuracy) the horrendous perils of the approach maneuver.

9. Residents, patrons and members of protective groups, of course, are excepted.

10. This is only significant, of course, if one could show that persons in the privacy of their own homes, but not in interaction, do exhibit facial expressions. While there is no reliable evidence on this question, it is the feeling of the writer, based only on her own experience that this is the case. While it seems likely that the face, even in private, does not exhibit as much expression as does the face in interaction, it nevertheless seems reasonable to assume that much of the "imaginary interaction" the individual carries on when alone is accompanied by changes in the face. And it is certainly true that no one in the privacy of their home feels constrained to stifle smiles, laughter or tears.

11. See Ch. V.

12. See Ch. V., on "accessibility".

CHAPTER V  
CONTACT MANAGEMENT

The overall tactical problem of contact management may, for reasons of analysis, be sub-divided into two types, non-verbal and verbal. Non-verbal contact management concerns the tactics<sup>C</sup><sub>A</sub> used in dealing with strangers with whom one is not in spoken interaction and verbal contact management refers to the tactics used while in spoken interaction with strangers. Although we shall consider each type separately, it must be emphasized that they are highly interrelated. Tactics of non-verbal contact may be used to avoid or initiate spoken interaction. And while spoken interaction is in process, non-verbal tactics continue to be employed, whether to maintain, prolong or terminate the verbal exchange. With this in mind, let us turn to the first of the two types.

Non-Verbal

The tactics of non-verbal contact management may themselves be divided into three sub-types, depending on the particular problem to which the tactics are addressed: These are the problems of routing, of seating, and of eye contact.

Routing. The problem of routing is one we have met earlier--although only incidentally--in relation to self management both during the approach and in the midst of the enemy. Whenever the individual moves through space in a public setting, he must be concerned

with moving himself in such a way as to avoid any unnecessary contact with fellow urbanites. Americans, as Edward Hall has pointed out,

. . . have a pattern which discourages touching, except in moments of intimacy. When we ride on a street car or crowded elevator, we will "hold ourselves in", having been taught from early childhood to avoid bodily contact with strangers.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if the individual in the public setting is to avoid any actions which might cast doubts on the self he wishes to project, he must route himself so as to render his passage as free from body contact as is possible.

One of the most amazing aspects of the behavior of man in public settings, is the tremendous skill which he shows in handling the routing problem. No matter how crowded the space or rapid the movement, he shows an amazing capacity to get from one place to another with a minimum of body contact with the many strangers pressing in around him.

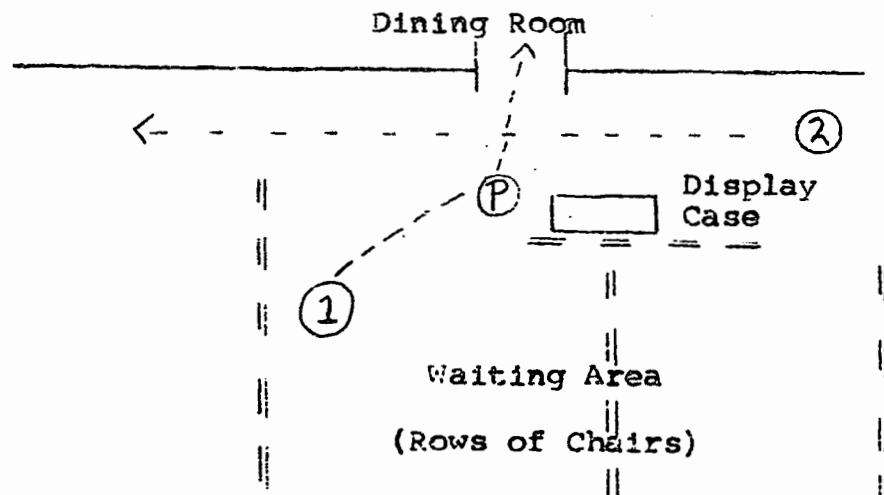
Just how this is accomplished is only barely understood.<sup>2</sup> In most instances, it appears to be done without any fully-conscious effort on the part of the individual. As we saw in the last chapter, persons moving through space, whether in reaching a position or during the performance of their particular battle style, often appear to be concentrating on anything and everything but the placement of the persons who surround them. Only when the setting is excessively crowded does conscious control appear to be necessary, as when one speaks of "making ones ways

through a crowd".

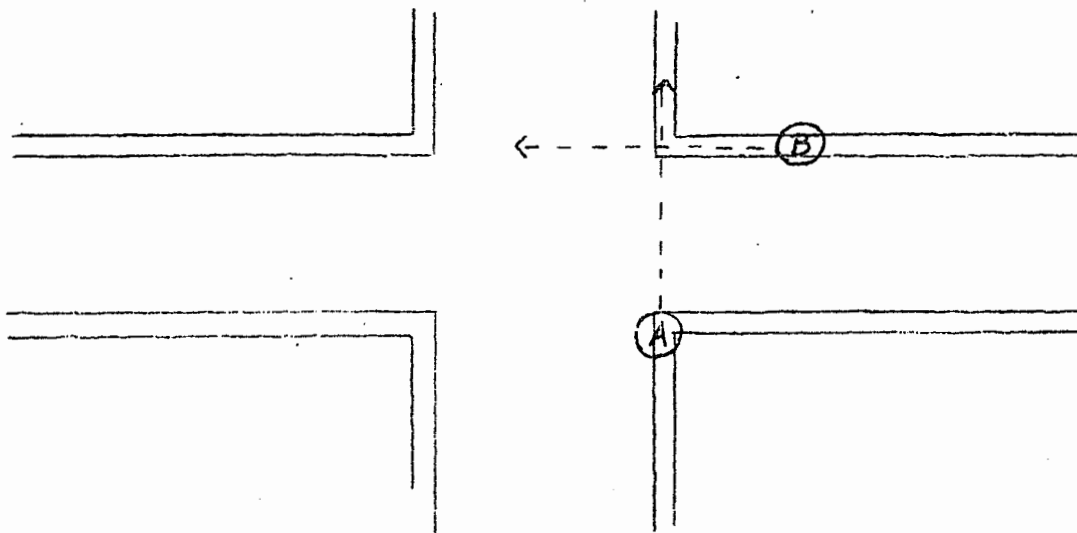
At other, less crowded times, there seems to be operating a kind of rhythm of movement--an urban rhythm, if you will, a coping technique which the urbanite has apparently learned so well that he performs it without much realization that he is doing so.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the speed with which people move in public settings, it is extremely difficult to capture the operation of this urban rhythm in any detail. Two rather sketchy descriptions of brief routing episodes and accompanying diagrams will have to suffice in illustrating this technique.

The scene of the first episode is a large airport terminal. Man #1 is in the process of moving from the waiting area, across the open passageway and toward the entrance to the dining room. Man #2 is proceeding down the passageway. Their movements are such that they appear to be headed for a collision. But just short of the point where the collision would occur, man #1 pauses for a fraction of a second, turning his head in the direction of the display case (position of pause marked P on diagram).. He then proceeds, passing just behind man #2.



The second episode takes place on a city street. Woman A is in the process of crossing the street and moving along the sidewalk in a straight line. Woman B is approaching the corner at right angles to woman A. Like the men in the preceding episode, their movements are such that they appear to be on a collision course. However, as woman A nears the point of collision (the sidewalk corner) her movements slow down, almost imperceptibly and with no actual break in stride. At the same time, woman B's movements speed up, so that rather than colliding, A passes directly behind B.



One further observation regarding the operation of the routing technique may be made. There does appear to be a general tendency to follow, whenever possible, the traffic rule of keeping to the right. This is particularly evident when two groups of people, one from either side of the street, are crossing an intersection.

Much remains that is not understood. What factors influence the choice of one route over another if both seem equally crowded or equally free? Is avoidance of body contact always preferable, even when the accomplish-

ment of such avoidance requires great physical strain? For example, if the choice is between passing through a group of people or squeezing through an extremely narrow space between two inanimate objects, which is the preferred route? These questions, and many more, must for the time, remain unanswered.

Seating. Many public settings present opportunities for people to seat themselves. Bus depots, terminals, libraries, theaters, bars, restaurants, parks, etc., all make seating space available. In such settings, the individual is confronted with a second problem of non-verbal contact management. He must place himself in such a way as to insure that his action in no way disrupts or conflicts with the image of himself which he wishes to project. This concern is necessary because seating placement, at least for Americans, is a form of body language communication. When an individual sits, this simple action sends out signals to those around him which indicate to them something about the kind of person he is and the kinds of further actions he may be expected to take.

Robert Sommer, a sociologist, has been very interested in looking at seating patterns among acquaintances,<sup>4</sup> but there has been very little concern with the way in which persons seat themselves when in the presence of strangers. Some tentative suggestions for approaching the problem may, however, be made.

There appear to be at least six factors affecting the individual's decision as to where he will seat himself within a public setting. We will consider these one by one, but at the same time keeping in mind that in any given instance of a seating decision, all are operating simultaneously.


First, there is the question of whether the individual desires avoidance or spoken interaction. It seems as true among strangers as among acquaintances that the desire for spoken interaction is communicated by means of sitting close to the person or persons with whom one wishes to converse. But, as we shall see below, what constitutes "close" in a public setting will vary depending on all the other factors. This much can be said, In any given setting, at any given moment, most of the persons within it will be fully aware of what does or does not constitute a signal for desired interaction. Women may be attuned to such signals even more intensely than are men because of their greater felt need to protect themselves from the dangers of interacting with strangers. What signal the individual desires to communicate, then, avoidance or interaction, will affect his decision as to where to sit. But what any given act of sitting will mean, will vary according to the following five factors.

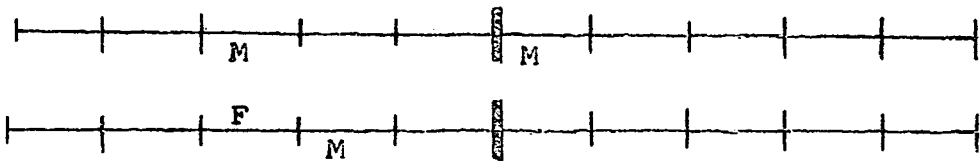
A second factor is how much seating space is available to choose from. Thus, for example, if only one seat at a lunch counter is free, a male may take the seat without suggesting to the females on either side that a pick-up is intended. But if almost all the seats



are empty, and a male chooses to sit next to a female (or vice versa), there will be no question in the mind of the woman (or, for that matter, in the minds of any other observers) as to just what the gentleman intends.<sup>5</sup>

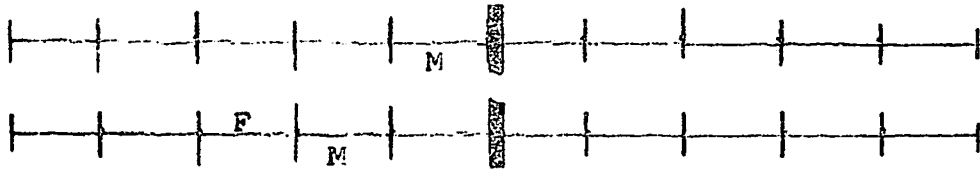
Third, as just suggested, sex (and to a lesser degree its combination with age) is extremely important in determining the meaning which will be assigned to any given act of seating. It appears to be the case that whenever the age and sex of two strangers are such that one might appear sexually attractive to the other, the distance required to insure that no spoken interaction signal is given is greater than if no sexual attraction potential obtains. Some concrete materials on a specific setting will suggest the dynamics of the sex-age factor.

The following charts were recorded in the waiting area of a small bus depot. There are two benches, each containing ten seats on either side for a total of forty seats. The seats of the benches are separated from one another by arm rests and in the middle of each bench there is a wooden divider, larger than the arm rests, which tends to form separate units out of the five seats on either side of it. Males in the charts are designated by M, females by F. The  sign indicates that persons are together. The seating patterns are shown at 15 minute intervals between 8:45 a.m. and 9:45 a.m.<sup>6</sup>



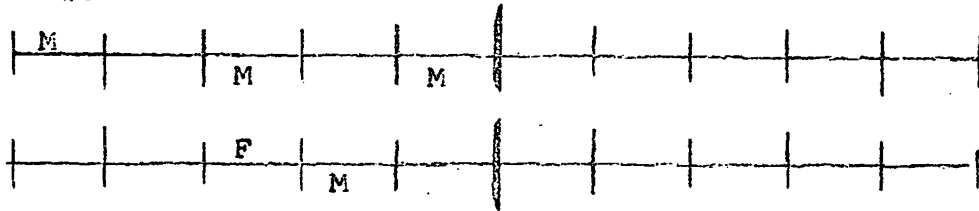
8:45

#2



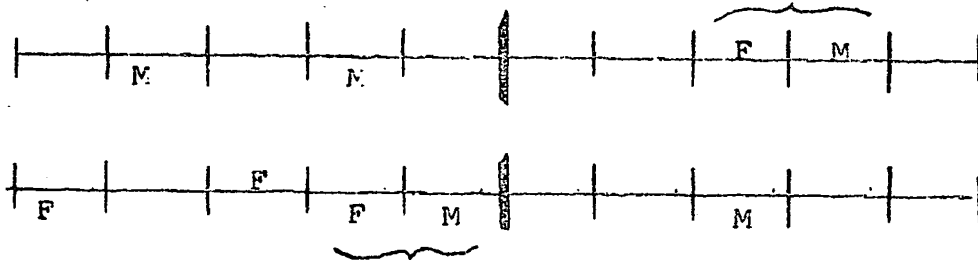
9:00

#3



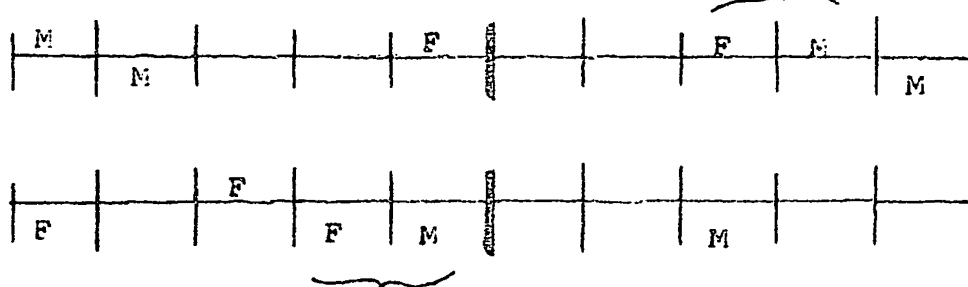
9:15

#4



9:30

#5



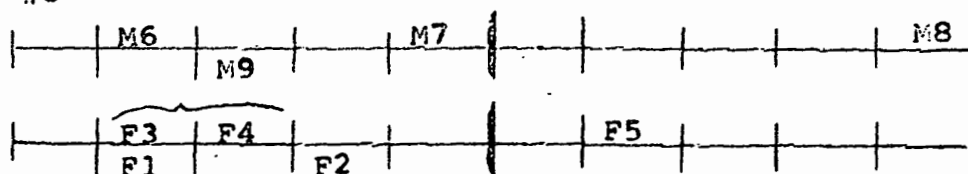
9:45

Note that with one exception (shown in chart #5), no lone male took a seat in one of the five unit sections when only a lone female was already seated there (and vice versa). In chart #5 the female was elderly, and even here, the space between her and the male is the maximum possible within the five seat unit.

Of course this pattern is not invariable. But it does appear to obtain fairly constantly as long as the numbers of people present in the area is small as compared to the number of seats available. Once the area begins to fill, the distance insuring that no spoken interaction signal is given appears to decrease. This is true even though actual seats may still be plentiful. Thus, for example, the exception in chart #5 may be accounted for as much by the fact that at 9:45 the waiting area contained more people than at any other time in the sequence as by the factor of the woman's age.

Between those for whom no potential for sexual attraction is thought to obtain, a shorter distance suffices to insure that no signal is given. Thus, if the number of persons in an area is small, and empty seats plentiful, a lone woman may still seat herself one or two seats away from another woman without suggesting any desire for spoken interaction. Note for example the placement of figures 1 and 2 in chart #6 which follows.

#6



On the other hand, had female #1 seated herself right next to female #2, her action would most certainly have constituted a signal.

Small children are excepted. They may sit wherever and at whatever distance they please without their actions constituting any sort of signal. This is not because the child may not wish to initiate verbal interaction but because small children are not considered to be full persons. As such, the adult is quite free, if he wishes, to behave as if the child were not actually present.

A fourth element in seating decisions is the number of persons approaching in a group and making the decision. If only one, there is a necessity for far greater care than if two or three. Dyads and triads (particularly if the group is of mixed sex) have a freedom to sit almost anywhere in the setting without fear of mis-interpretation. Note that in charts #4 and #5 shown above, a lone female and a mixed sex couple are seated in the same five seat unit. This occurred at a time when the waiting area was relatively full; but it also occurs when fewer people are about.

The generalization about numbers in the seating decision is, of course, modified by conditions obtaining on the other five variables. Thus, in a semi-deserted setting, if a dyad or triad chooses to sit very close to a lone individual it is quite likely that their action will be seen by the lone person as threatening. And this likelihood is intensified if the lone person is female and the dyad or triad is all male.

Nevertheless, in most instances, two or three person groups are less often seen as signaling a desire for spoken interaction, regardless of where they sit. Apparently it is assumed that persons already in interaction are unlikely to be interested in initiating it with someone else.

What the setting is used for is a fifth factor determining what any given act of seating will mean and, therefore, where the individual will choose to sit. Thus, for example, in a highly task oriented setting like a library, spacing patterns which are so important in other settings are disregarded. It is quite common to observe a <sup>a</sup> male sit down at a table occupied only by a lone female, and vice versa. Or, in a small area within a library containing a semi-circle of five comfortable chairs, persons quite often choose a chair right next to one which is occupied, even though all the others are empty. And this is true regardless of the sex and/or age of those involved.

In bars, quite the reverse is often true. Defined as settings where spoken interaction is likely to occur, spacing becomes more fraught with meaning than in any other public place. Here the lone individual who wishes to signal only avoidance, must be particularly careful to seat himself as far away from others as possible. This is not too difficult if there are booths or separate tables available.<sup>7</sup> But to sit at the bar counter itself is to render avoidance almost impossible because people along a counter feel quite free to engage one another in conversation. (This may be due, in part,

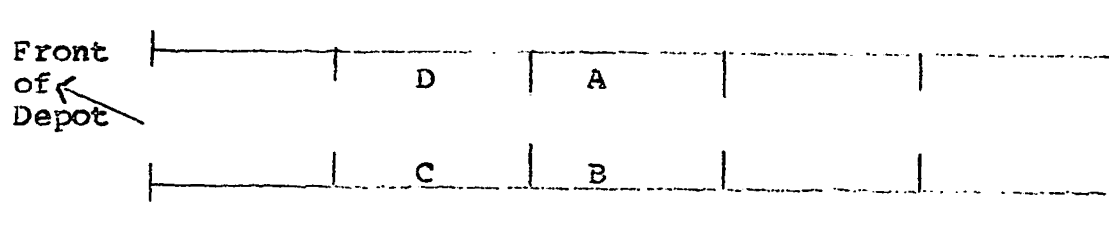
to the tendency of patrons and residents to congregate in this area).

A sixth and final factor affecting seating decisions is the ecology or physical arrangement of the setting and the potential which this arrangement holds for eye contact. Eye contact with strangers is most often to be avoided. Some settings are arranged so that to sit in a given spot is to be placed in the position of having to look at the person seated opposite. Unless props, such as books, magazines, etc., are available to cut off the line of vision, such a position can be very <sup>un</sup> comfortable. As Sommer has noted,

Just as people moving about a house require resting places for solitude or individual concentration, people rooted to a given spot in a public area require places where their eyes can rest without stress. There is the apocryphal story of the stress produced by the newspaper strike in New York City where the seated men [in the subway] were unable to "retreat into" newspapers and had to look at the other occupants, particularly women standing above them."<sup>8</sup>

Eye contact is discussed in the next section. One brief illustration will suffice to indicate the way in which avoidance of eye contact may affect seating decisions.

Four middle class women are seated in the waiting area of a bus depot as indicated below.



Women A, B, and C had been present first and A had been avoiding any possibilities of eye contact with B and C by turning her head to her right in such a way as to look toward the front of the depot. Woman D then arrived, placing some packages in the empty end seat and sitting down next to A. Now the problem of eye contact for A has been complicated. To look straight ahead is to look directly at B or C, or at least to appear to be doing so. To look toward the front of the depot is to look directly at D or to strain her neck so as to look either in front of or behind D's head. To look to the rear of the depot requires considerable strain and also involves looking in the direction of persons seated to her left. For several minutes, A attempts to continue looking to the front, straining so as to direct her gaze either in front of or behind D; or occasionally alternating by looking directly at B and C. That she is straining is evident by the rapid shifts in the direction of her gaze and by an almost continual rubbing of the neck. Finally, apparently finding the strain too much, she leaves, goes to the front of the depot and returns minutes later to take a different seat.

Eye Contact. The third and final problem of non-verbal contact management is that of eye contact. In relations with strangers, particularly if avoidance of spoken interaction is desired, great pains are taken by the individual to prevent the possibility of looking into the eyes of another. There is good reason for this. Like body contact and sitting close, the meeting of eyes is an expression of an on-going or desired relationship. Perhaps even more than body contact or proximate seating, eye contact between human beings is pregnant with meaning. As Georg Simmel observed over 50 years ago:

The limits [of eye contact] are to be determined by the significant fact that the glance by which one seeks to perceive the other is itself expressive. By the glance which reveals the other, one discloses himself. By the same act in which the observer seeks to know the observed, he surrenders himself to be understood by the observer. The

eye cannot take unless at the same time it gives. The eye of a person discloses his own soul when he seeks to uncover that of another. What occurs in this direct mutual glance represents the most perfect reciprocity in the entire field of human relationships.<sup>9</sup>

More recently Michael Argyle and Janet Dean reported that eye contact serves a number of functions-- one of the most important being a quest for feedback during social interaction, as well as a signaling that the communication channel is open. In addition, eye contact may be seen as a component of intimacy and is, in a significant way, the equivalent of physical proximity.<sup>10</sup>

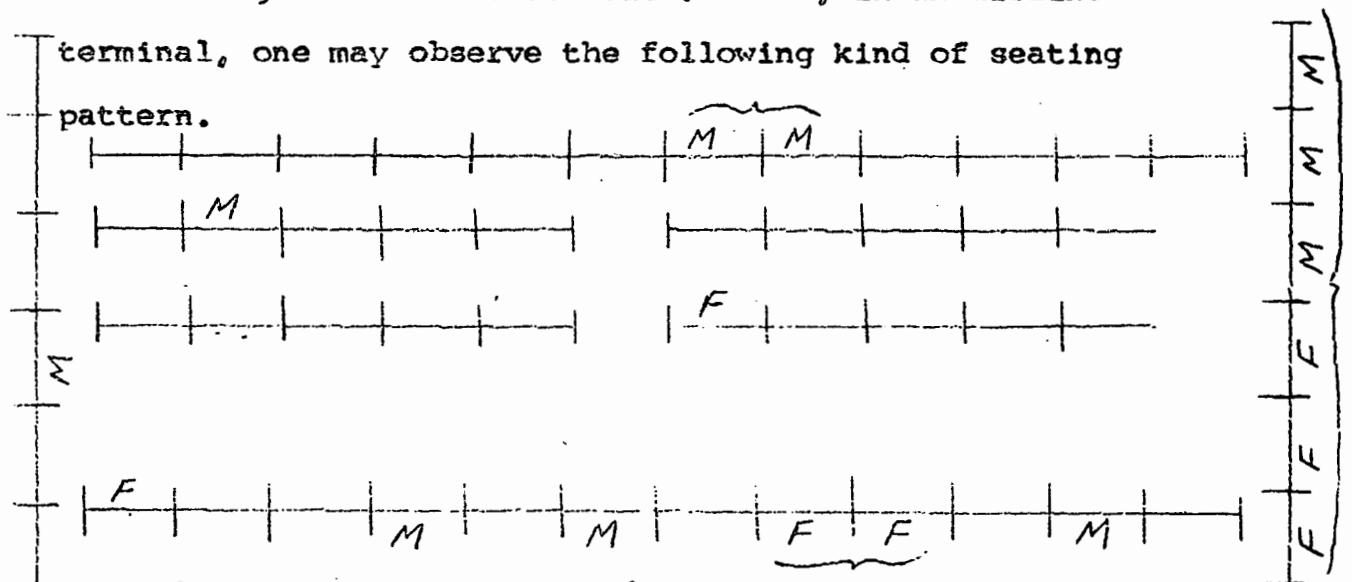
It is quite clear that most persons in public places are often unwilling to open themselves to spoken interaction, to express mutual relationships or to encourage intimacy with their fellow urbanites. They simply cannot be certain enough of just who these strangers are or what they might be up to, to risk their fragile selves through such actions.<sup>11</sup>

A number of different techniques may be used to avoid eye contact. We shall look at four of these.

First, as seen above, props may be used. This utilization of props to avoid eye contact is one of the main characteristics of the "Nester" and the "Sweet Young Thing." But the use of props is not confined to these two types. Almost everyone within a public setting uses them at one time or another, some simply rely on them more heavily than others.



Second, the problem may be handled by concentrating one's gaze on inanimate objects. This, of course, is what characterizes the "Investigator"; but as was pointed out, "Seasoned Urbanites" utilize this tactic as well. Sometimes the setting is arranged so that certain seating and/or standing positions within it, make it possible for the individual taking the position to concentrate his attention on some inanimate object or objects. Unlike the Investigator who is constantly on the move, persons in such positions may remain in one spot and still protect themselves from direct eye contact with others. In other settings, seats may be available which face out into a large open space rather than facing a row of other seats. Thus, in an airline terminal, one may observe the following kind of seating pattern.



Note that with two exceptions (one of the persons involved in the exceptions being the writer who needed a clear view of the entire section), the 17 persons here have arranged themselves either around the outside of the seating area, or if within the area, have seated themselves in such a way that only the backs of others are within their line of vision.

A third, and quite commonly used means for avoiding eye contact is the "middle distance stare." This is particularly effective in situations which are either so crowded or so arranged that no matter where one looks, one is looking at someone. Here the individual looks out into the setting, but does so without focusing on anything. The effectiveness of this tactic lies in the ability of the human animal to ascertain, even at considerable distances and with considerable accuracy, whether or not someone is actually looking at him (i.e., whether the eye gazing in his direction is focused.)<sup>12</sup>

The fourth and final technique is less commonly used but because of its effectiveness, deserves special mention. This is the wearing of sun glasses, particularly when indoors. When an individual's eyes are covered by dark glasses, it is impossible for those around him to know whether he is looking at them or not. While the wearer can know what others are doing, his eye behavior is veiled. It may be that the somewhat odious connotation attached to wearing dark glasses indoors is a response to this very fact. To the urbanite there is something not quite cricket in the ability of someone to look directly at him without his knowing it. Nevertheless, dark glasses are a great advantage to the wearer, as their manufacturers apparently well understand. A display of sun glasses observed recently carried this come-on:  
LOOK AT PEOPLE WITHOUT THEIR KNOWING IT!

### Verbal

Not all contact between strangers in public settings takes place at the non-verbal level. Occasions do arise--and surprisingly enough, are not uncommon--when strangers find themselves in verbal communication. Thus, not only must non-verbal contact be managed, so too must the occasions of verbal contact. We shall consider two phases of this tactical problem. First is the question of accessibility, or who may legitimately speak to whom in a public setting. Second, one of the major tactics for handling interaction with strangers, the public bargain will be discussed.

Accessibility. As we have repeatedly observed, a good part of the individual's behavior in non-verbal contact is determined by whether or not he wishes to initiate interaction. In some cases, his desire to do so may be considered illegitimate, as for example, a male who attempts a "pick up", or a Maverick who forces another to interact with him. But there are many situations where persons may quite legitimately ask for and expect to be granted verbal contact. There appear, in fact, to be at least six such situations in which persons are accessible to one another.<sup>13</sup>

First, the "legitimate solicitor" is granted access to all persons in a public setting. The individual seeking signatures on a petition, selling Veterans' Day poppies, collecting contributions for a worthy cause, etc., may legitimately approach any and all within a public area. This applies however only to solicitations

sanctioned by the society, and in many cases, permissible by law. Thus, the prostitute, the beggar, the "dirty postcard" salesman are not granted the right of access, and are always subject to arrest or at least removal from the setting.

Second, access is most generally allowed between persons or groups of persons who are seen as having no potential for sexual interest in one another. Women in public settings have a great deal of access to one another and are quite free to seek each other's assistance. For example, during the course of observation, the writer was approached on ten different occasions by females requesting help of some kind. Requests included such various matters as the location of a mail box, how to catch a city bus, whether a bus had come along, looking after luggage while the owner took care of an errand and where change might be obtained. In women's rest rooms, accessibility is even greater. Women may ask each other to hold doors, look after children, and share supplies, such as towels or even cigarettes.

Access between women is not limited to requests for help. In a waiting situation, for example, a woman may legitimately attempt to engage another in a prolonged conversation as a way of passing the time. This is particularly true among older women who are often to be observed relating some of the intimate details of their lives to one another. The following conversation took place in a bus depot between two older women who were traveling together and a lone older woman who was waiting for the same bus. The pair and the lone woman had not been

acquainted prior to the time they began their conversation.

The lone woman explains to the others that she is traveling in connection with a death. One of the other women replies that if the person who died was old, it is not so sad. "Besides, we all have some very unpleasant things ahead of us. I lost my mother just this last spring." She then goes into the events surrounding the death in great detail.

Men, on the other hand, have no such easy access to one another. Presumably this is a result of the suspicion in our society that relations between men are more likely to be homosexual than are relations between women. In his study of a millenarian cult, John Lofland found that the male members of the sect who attempted to initiate contact with persons in public places (as the first step in an attempt at conversion) met with very little success as illustrated in these instances:

In the winter of 1962-63, Elmer and Alfred attempted access in libraries and museums. Elmer liked to station himself near the psychology section of a library, observe in what books people were browsing, and wander about the reading rooms noting what books were being read. Upon finding a person involved in a book imagined to be "cosmic" in concern (books on psychology, religion or world affairs), he would stay close by the person, waiting for an occurrence that could bring about a conversation. Elmer did much looking but he rarely found opportunity to talk and often complained about the difficulties of striking up a conversation with strangers.

Access was equally difficult in museums. While walking around looking at the exhibits, Alfred's ploy was to station himself next to a co-patronizer and hope for a likely opening. He complained that it was difficult to make such an opening. If you looked at a work while standing beside a stranger and said, "That is certainly an interesting bear" (or whatever), they tended to "look at you as if you are some kind of nut" and walk away.<sup>14</sup>

Female members of the cult met with much less difficulty in such attempts. In one among many instances, a female member even returned to the cult headquarters with a woman whom she had just met on a bus.

Members of mixed-sex groups are also viewed as having no potential for sexual interest in others (outside their group) and thus are granted access to and are seen as accessible by almost anyone in the setting-- whether lone or the member of a group. Thus a male-female couple may approach either a lone male or female to ask for assistance and a lone person (either male or female) may initiate conversation with the members of a mixed sex group.

Third, access is legitimate between persons who spend a good deal of time in the setting. Patrons are likely to know other patrons and residents (at least by sight). The mutual sharing of a setting for prolonged periods of time establishes the relationship, even before any verbal contact occurs.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when patrons and residents initiate interaction with one another, they do so not as stranger to stranger, but as persons who already share a relationship even in the absence of previously spoken words or mutual acquaintances. One of the more interesting possibilities along this line is illustrated in this account by a young woman.

I had been working in Chicago for three months and during all that time it had been my practice to stop at the same coffee shop near my office each morning for about a half hour before going to work. On the very last day of my job, I was in the coffee shop as usual and was preparing to leave when a young man approached me. I had noticed him before but we had never spoken. He said that he had seen me every morning for the

past three months and had not wanted to approach me earlier but felt that it was all-right to do so now. He said he would very much like to get to know me and perhaps to go out on a date. He introduced himself and I replied by giving him my name in return. I told him that it was very nice of him to have approached me but that this was the very last day I would be on the job; that, in fact, I would be leaving Chicago tomorrow. The interesting part of all this is that I felt it was quite proper for him to have talked to me in this way, and had I been remaining in Chicago, I might even have agreed to go out with him.

Fourth, there is freedom of access between residents and all others in the setting, as long as the identity of the resident is established at the onset.

The freedom with which newcomers and customers approach employees (particularly if they are uniformed and thus readily identifiable) and with which employees approach newcomers and customers is well-known. Persons seeking assistance in a setting are considered to have every right to seek out an employee, and employees are thought to have a duty to approach newcomers or customers if they appear to need assistance. What is not so well-known is that access may also be granted between colonizers and newcomers and customers. However, if the colonizer is to initiate the interaction, he must make absolutely certain that the other understands his identity almost at once. In doing so, he makes clear that like the employee he "belongs" in the setting and is thus entitled to behave toward the newcomer or customer as any host would toward visitors to his home. Let us look at an example of how this identity establishment may be accomplished.

A young woman is seated in the very last seat of a bus, the seat extends the entire width of the bus. She has been on the bus since it started out from the depot and took the seat she now occupies at the time she boarded. After the bus has been traveling for some five minutes, it stops at an intersection and a working class middle aged male comes aboard. After paying the driver, he moves toward the rear and as he is about to reach the back seat, he looks at the woman seated there and says, "This is my favorite place. Will I be in the way?" The woman smiles and replies that of course he will not. He seats himself on the same seat but somewhat to the left of her, next to the window. During the next twenty or thirty minutes they engage in on again off again conversation. Finally, they begin to talk and do not interrupt their conversation until the male leaves the bus.

The important thing to note here is that despite the usual concern of females with protecting themselves from spoken interaction with male strangers, this young woman was quite willing to engage the older man in conversation. It was not only possible but acceptable for him to speak to her because at the outset he had established himself as a resident colonizer in that particular bus during that particular scheduled trip. With the words, "This is my favorite place", he made it very clear that he was the host and she the visitor.

Fifth, as Erving Goffman and Fred Davis have documented, all persons in a public setting have access to any physically stigmatized person who may be present.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly enough, the reverse is not true. Stigmatized persons may not initiate access with all others. Presumably, the stigma renders its carrier less deserving of privileges than are "normal" human beings. Thus, the various opportunities for interaction outlined above do not hold for the stigmatized. And at the same time, he



is denied the right to keep himself out of interaction even if he may wish to do so. He is in much the same situation as the child who is to "speak only when spoken to".

This willingness on the part of "normals" to intrude themselves into the affairs of the stigmatized most certainly adds to the burden of an already burdensome life, as the following incident clearly demonstrates.

A male, middle aged, is wandering about the bus depot. He is blind, or at least partially blind and has with him a mutt who apparently serves as his lead dog. The dog is wearing a special harness to aid in the signaling that must go on between them. A middle aged woman has been watching him for some time. He is now standing in front of the lunch counter, apparently preparatory to taking a seat. As he is standing there, the woman approaches, introduces herself and begins telling him about some people she knows who are blind and what was done for them and so forth. He listens politely for a few moments, then turns and begins to maneuver himself onto a lunch counter seat. The woman, noting this, desires to be helpful and she tries to assist him in getting up to the counter and on to a stool. In doing so, she bumps into the dog several times, changes positions and then gets herself, the dog and the man tangled up in the leash. During all this she keeps reaching down to pet the dog who is becoming more confused and excited all the time. Finally she leaves, the man orders coffee, finishes drinking it and leaves unaided; a far smoother departure than arrival.

Sixth, mutual access is allowed between all persons in a setting in situations where the everyday routine has been suspended. This may be, as Goffman has observed, a time of crisis.

Of course, at moments of great crisis, a new set of motives may suddenly become effective and the established social distance between teams may. . . decrease.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the recent blackout of the Eastern Seaboard created a crisis situation in which the normal rules of accessibility were suspended. Loudon Wainwright, writing for Life,

made the following observations.

It seemed to me that the blackout quite literally transformed the people of New York. Ordinarily smug and comfortable in the high hives of the city where they live and work, they are largely strangers to one another when the lights are on. In the darkness they emerged not as shadows, but far warmer and more substantial than usual. Stripped of the anonymity that goes with full illumination, they became humans conscious of and concerned about the other humans around them.<sup>18</sup>

And Time reported that,

The most pressing problem was to rescue all the people trapped in subways and elevators. A few women fainted and there were some hysteria cases, but most of the imprisoned straphangers rose to the occasion. Aboard one train, a man who called himself Lord Echo got everybody to join him in calypso songs; two hours later, astonished rescuers found 50 passengers dancing in the aisles.<sup>19</sup>

But everyday routine may be suspended in situations other than those caused by a crisis. Any event out of the ordinary, even a happy one like a parade, will create the requisite conditions. For example, during a time when an anti-Vietnam war group was holding forth in a large hall between two University campus buildings, persons who passed through the hall often stopped to listen, argue, and often initiate conversations with those about them. Stimulated by arguments between speakers, little groups of people who had never before spoken to one another, were continually breaking off from the main group to begin arguments on their own. Or, a newcomer might ask anyone in the setting what was going on and receive a full explanation. On another occasion, when a large group of persons had gathered to watch the arrest of a number of sit-in demonstrators, individuals within the group of observers demonstrated their willingness to

initiate verbal interaction with anyone and everyone around them. Sometimes only a few minutes of conversation ensued, sometimes there were long discussions, sometimes violent and bitter arguments.

Whatever the cause, a situation of suspended routine creates for all those who experience it a kind of community, a sharing of experience, rendering them for that brief time at least, no strangers to one another at all, but comrades.

Before turning to a consideration of the public bargain, one final observation is in order. In none of these situations of legitimate access is the person approached required to respond. He has every right to simply ignore anyone who attempts to speak to him. The difference between legitimate and illegitimate access is simply that in the former, the approached individual has no cause for complaint. He may not wish to become engaged and that is his privilege. But he may not bring any sanctions against the other without himself committing an error.

The Public Bargain. In Chapter I, it was suggested that social life may be viewed as a kind of social bargain, a whispered enjoiner to let us all protect each other so we can carry on the business of living. It was further suggested that while this bargain obtained among persons who knew one another, among strangers in an urban public setting, no such assurance of mutual protection was given. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the urbanite is concerned above all else with his own protection. He is, after all, in battle, and if his survival depends on the destruction of some other, well, that is the way of war.

This is not to say that persons in public settings do not support each other's selves. In fact, most persons in a public setting most of the time are doing just that. All the various tactics of self management and non-verbal contact management are, in most instances, as protective to others in the setting as they are to the person utilizing them. And, on occasions, persons may help their fellow urbanites out of simple generosity. But under only one set of circumstances will the urbanite in a public setting inevitably and invariably go out of his way to protect and support the self of the other; only under circumstances where to refuse the support would be to put himself in danger. The public bargain may be viewed as an agreement between strangers guaranteeing mutual "self" support only under conditions where the failure to extend such support would prove dangerous to the one refusing it.

To understand the difference between the social bargain and the public bargain, let us examine an instance of the social bargain's operation.

Youthful, Rep. Andy Jacobs, Jr., (D., Ind.), 33, who has a sense of humor like that of his father, a former House member, doesn't get annoyed by the lordly airs of senior colleagues, some of whom still don't recognize him.

The Hoosier freshman was about to have his hair trimmed in the Capitol barbershop not long ago when 280-pound Rep. Robert A. "Fats" Everett, (D. Tenn.), literally the biggest man in the House waved him to one side. "You'll have to wait, son", snapped Everett, "Congressmen have seniority in these chairs."

And when Jacobs was in the Democratic cloakroom, veteran Rep. Jimmy Morrison (D. La.) who was making a phone call wagged a finger at him and commanded, "Son, find out where they are on that roll call on the floor." Jacobs returned soon and informed Morrison, "They're on the H's, sir."

A newsman friend suggested that Jacobs should put an end to this tomfoolery by making known his identity but the good-natured young Hoosier only grinned. "It's easier to do what they say than to listen to apologies", he remarked, "The best way for a newcomer to make himself known around here is to establish a good legislative record."<sup>20</sup>

The young Congressman could certainly have called these errors to the attention of his somewhat overbearing colleagues without in any way discrediting himself. But he was as concerned with protecting them as with himself and he did not wish them to suffer the embarrassment that on-the-spot disclosure would have caused. Such is the nature of the social bargain.

But among strangers the situation is quite different. Except when disclosure would result in discrediting the self, the individual is only too willing to clear up any identity errors, regardless of the embarrassment this may cause the other. However, should he be himself endangered by a failure to support the other, he will participate heartily in what I have called, the public bargain. The following exchange between the writer and a bus depot customer illustrates this point.

Just a few moments before 8:30, a bus drove into the runway. I looked about, actually for the purpose of checking who was in the seat behind me so as to complete my 8:30 seating chart. The woman seated facing me in the far left seat apparently misinterpreted my look. She leaned toward me. "I don't think that's the Chicago bus". I replied, "I don't think so, but I don't know." Then there was an announcement to which we both listened with great attention. The bus was headed for Toledo. We nodded as though in mutual understanding that this was not the Chicago bus. She said, "It's one of those short stops". I nodded. She continued, "I've never waited for a bus yet that was on time." I smiled in agreement, the conversation ended.

Here is a case in which one stranger was willing to go along with and thus support the self of another stranger. But this only occurred because to have admitted that I was not waiting for a bus, that I had turned around not to get the name of the incoming bus but to get data for a seating chart, would have been to admit that I was in the depot for illegitimate purposes--and that would have been discrediting.

What kinds of actions the public bargain will support depends on what kind of person is performing the action. With conventionals, support is usually only required in situations such as that described above. Only in direct verbal confrontation with conventionals is there much possibility that non-support will lead to discrediting. But among Mavericks--those persons lacking the decency to have a protective battle style--almost all contact, verbal and non-verbal, is fraught with danger. The Maverick is so unpredictable that to challenge any of his actions in any way is to run the risk that his next action will lead to danger for the self.

Thus, for example, persons in public settings are quite willing to stare at a conventional who has just tripped over a piece of luggage. He is a fairly predictable human being. He will realize that he has done wrong, will feel ashamed and will usually take some corrective action. But were a spastic to undergo the same difficulty, no challenging stares would result. All the persons in the setting would, rather, avert their eyes, conspiring together to support the fiction that nothing at all has happened. For the spastic, able to

exert only little, if any, body control, is unnerving. He himself does not know what his body may do, and if he is not predictable to himself, he is certainly not predictable to others. By pretending that nothing has occurred, by supporting an image for the spastic of an adequate self, these others hope to protect themselves, ostrich fashion, from any possibility of their being involved in his next accident.

Mavericks represent constant threats to all others in the setting. However, unpredictable as they are, children may be controlled. They are small and if necessary, force may be used to bring them into line. And the constantly stigmatized, despite their inability to control their bodies, are, after all, just like everyone else inside. It is understood that they would most certainly adopt a conventional battle style if they could. But eccentrics are another matter altogether. Not only are they unpredictable, they are irresponsible and absolutely unresponsive to sanctions. Thus, it is in urban man's contact with eccentrics that we may observe the full fruition of the public bargain.

Once an individual has definitely established himself as an eccentric, he may engage in the most bizarre behavior without exciting the slightest notice. No matter how peculiar his appearance or how odd his actions, he will be treated as though he looked and acted like a conventional human being. Of course, should his behavior appear excessively bizarre or potentially physically dangerous, someone may call the authorities. But this is an action that is taken behind his back. To

his face, the elaborate fiction of his complete "normality" will continue to be acted out.

At its most simple, the operation of the public bargain between urbanites and eccentrics may involve no more than disattention to peculiarities in presentation, as in the following incident.

We entered the coffee shop about 11:00 p.m. and sat in booths along one side. I was sitting so that I could see everyone in the booths ahead of us, all the way up to the door. We had not been there very long when a man of about 50 came in and sat himself down about three booths ahead, facing in my direction. He ordered, and for awhile I did not pay much attention to him; that is, until a murmur of conversation and a slight blur of movement made me look again in his direction. There he sat, eating his dinner, and quite clearly carrying on an animated conversation with someone who, also quite clearly, was not there. This invisible companion, to judge by the man's actions, was apparently seated on the other side of the table. As time passed, the conversation became more audible, and the man began to gesture more boldly, apparently involved in some very intense conversation. His invisible companion carried on his part in the interchange, for every few minutes the man would stop, cock his head, hold his fork suspended, and listen in rapt attention to what his companion had to say. There were not very many people in the coffee shop, and those who were present were going out of their way to pretend they hadn't noticed. There was a young couple sitting in a booth right across the aisle from him and they were taking great pains to keep from looking at him and to stifle any laughter that might threaten to arise. I could see the employees every once in a while duck into a kitchen area to laugh quietly among themselves, or at least comment on the behavior, but I noted that the waitress who served the old gentlemen, did so with great calm, waiting patiently should he be in the midst of conversation, until he had finished before asking if he wanted anything else. Incidentally, the invisible



companion apparently was not hungry, for no food was ordered for him. I'm not quite certain what would have happened had an order for two been placed, but I rather suspect that it would have been served without comment.

When eccentrics and urbanites are engaged in verbal contact, the successful operation of the bargain becomes a bit more complex. Here one must do more than simply keep one's eyes averted. One must communicate the normality fiction through facial expression, words and body language. To fail to do so is to challenge the eccentric's self, and to do that is to risk all the dangers of unpredictability. In the following example, two "conventionals" are in interaction with an eccentric. One of the "conventionals" knows the eccentric slightly. To the other she is a complete stranger. Note that during the time the eccentric is present, she receives full support from them both. Only after she has gone do they feel free to express their true feelings about her behavior.

A working class woman, late 40's or early 50's, is seated at one of the horseshoe counters in a large coffee shop in a bus depot. She is cleanly dressed, wearing a seater and print dress. As she is drinking her coffee, a woman in her mid 70's comes out of an adjoining cafeteria and greets her. The newcomer is dressed in a rather motley collection of unmatched, apparently second-hand and terribly wrinkled and dirty items of apparel. Her dress is of a shiny satin-like material and is badly tattered. It hangs loosely around her as though it were several sizes too large. Over this, she wears a shiny, equally shapeless satin coat, apparently designed for wear on formal occasions. It contains a very large hole in one elbow. A badly bedraggled hat, with a tierra like frame sets on her head. She is carrying a large paper shopping bag which appears to be almost full although nothing within it is identifiable.

The old woman stops beside her acquaintance. "Enjoying hot coffee, huh?" They exchange a few words. The old woman looks about her and notices that on the counter are several dirty small paper plates, used by the coffee shop for serving sandwiches and pie. She picks up one nearest to her and asks her acquaintance, "Do you think I can have it? They usually give them to me. I have a collection of them you know?" The acquaintance says nothing for at this point the waitress approaches them. The old woman asks the waitress if she may have the plate. The waitress nods, her face showing neither surprise nor puzzlement. Another plate setting further down the counter comes to the old lady's attention but before she can reach it, the waitress has picked it up and placed it in the waste can. Noticing this, the lady asks the waitress if she may have the second plate. Again the waitress remains expressionless, pulls it out from the trash and hands it to her. Noticing other plates in the waste can, she asks if she might have those too, and in a short time she has all the dirty plates available in that section of the coffee shop in her possession. As she receives each one, she wipes it off slightly with a napkin and places it in her shopping bag. After she completes wiping off and packing the last plate, she bids good bye to her acquaintance and disappears. A few moments later the waitress approaches the other woman and asks her what the old lady does with all those paper plates. Her face is not expressionless now, and she quite clearly means to indicate that she thinks the now departed lady is a little crazy. The woman answers that she thinks the old lady has children to visit her and uses the plates, after cleaning them up, to serve refreshments to her visitors. Having verbalized this explanation, she apparently finds it unsatisfactory even to herself, shrugs her shoulders and laughs, and says to the waitress: "I don't really know exactly what she does with them." The two women exchange knowing smiles and the interaction between them ends.

There is a marvelous paradox in all this. The conventional, striving desperately to always appear as an adequate, worthy and legitimate human being, need make only the slightest error to lose all support for and confirmation of his desired image of self. But the eccentric, whose every action, whose very appearance,

constitutes an error, is granted continual support and confirmation no matter what he does. The most dangerous opponent in the great urban battle, is the most carefully protected from harm.

## CHAPTER V NOTES

1. Hall, Edward T. ., The Silent Language (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1959), p. 149.
2. Routing is easy to observe, but difficult to record. An adequate recording would involve an exact charting of who and what was where at the time the individual passed through. In the extreme fluidity of the public setting, it is simply not possible manually to record all of this quickly enough. See appendix for a further discussion of this matter.
3. It seems possible that the possession of this rhythm is one of the things which separates the urbanite from the "hick". In movies, television and written stories, the standard signal for identifying the "country boy come to the city" is his inability to walk down a city street without bumping into people. It is reported [John Lofland, personal communication] that some lower class types claim they can identify a recent rural migrant by the way that the heels of his shoes strike the concrete pavement. City people, apparently, have a special walk.
4. See, for example, the following articles by Sommer. "Studies in Personal Space", Sociometry, Vol. 22 (September, 1959), 247-260; "Leadership and Group Geography", Sociometry, Vol. 24 (March, 1961), 99-110; "The Distance for Comfortable Conversation: A Further Study", Sociometry, Vol. 25 (March, 1962), 111-116; and "Further Studies of Small Group Ecology", Sociometry, Vol. 28 (December, 1965), 337-348.

5. It is possible, of course, that the male does not intend to send this signal. He may be quite uninformed about the communication aspects of seating patterns (see Chapter II on mis-information about coping techniques). But whether he intends such a signal or not is irrelevant; his actions communicate intentions, not vice versa.

6. These observations are based on the recordings of seating patterns at 15 minute intervals in two different settings for a total of 17 hours and 30 minutes. The charts are not used in any sense as proofs of the ways in which persons seat themselves. While these selected patterns are typical of my full materials, the materials themselves do not represent long term systematic data. Nor were they analyzed in other than an impressionistic manner. The <sup>h</sup><sub>A</sub> charts are offered, rather, as illustrations of hypotheses of the empirical regularities that might be discovered if systematic empirical research were undertaken.

7. Except if the individual is a woman. A female who enters a bar alone and then seats herself in a booth probably invites spoken interaction more--particularly from males--than if she sat at the bar counter.

8. Sommer, Robert, "Further Studies of Small Group Ecology", op. cit., pp. 347-348.

9. Simmel, Georg, "Sociology of the Senses: Visual Interaction", in Robert W. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, eds., Introduction to the Science of Sociology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 356.

10. Argyle and Dean, op. cit.

11. Exceptions to this will be discussed in the following section under accessibility.

12. See Argyle and Dean, op. cit., p. 297. The middle distance stare is such a commonly employed technique that it can prove a hindrance in making observations in public places. The observer, from force of habit, may find himself slipping into it and realize only later that for a given period of time, he had seen nothing.

13. For a somewhat different list of situations of accessibility, see Erving Goffman, Behavior In Public Places (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1963), Chap. 8, esp. pp. 124-139. Goffman suggests that accessibility is permitted in situations where a person is in dire need of assistance. I would qualify this somewhat and suggest that persons will come to one another's assistance only if one or more of the six conditions of accessibility outlined below also obtains. It is quite clear that urbanites do, in fact, fail to assist others, even in situations where the need for help is obvious. Thus, persons will watch another being robbed, beaten, murdered, raped, etc. without so much as going for or calling the police--an action which would in no way put them in personal danger.

14. Iofland, John, Doomsday Cult (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 115-116.

15. This may be due to the fact that by reason of their continued use of the setting, they have already communicated to one another that they are persons of regular habits, persons who may therefore be expected to be safely predictable.

16. See Erving Goffman, Stigma (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963); and Fred David, "Deviance Disavowal", Social Problems, Vol. 9 (Fall, 1961), 120-132.

17. Goffman, Erving, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 167.

18. Wainwright, Loudon, "A Dark Night to Remember", Life (November , 1965), p. 35.

19. "The Disaster That Wasn't", Time, (November 19, 1965), p. 41A.

20. Drew Pearson, The Detroit Free Press (February 19, 1966).

CHAPTER VI  
TACTICAL ERRORS AND RECOVERY

Ray L. Birdwhistell has observed that "there are literally thousands of bits of information exchanged between human beings within moments of time."<sup>1</sup>

In the two preceding chapters, we have been watching individuals maneuver in the face of the enemy. This maneuvering is basically a process of giving off and receiving information. Whether involved in the management of self or in the management of contact, the urbanite in a public setting is constantly engaged in information exchange. He makes observations, acts, elicits responses (real or imagined), and acts again; each act feeding into the next observation; each observation feeding into the next act.

The complex and almost simultaneous character of these various activities cannot be overstressed. As Ray Birdwhistell says, within moments, there are thousands of bits of information exchanged. This is a complex and remarkable process in the social relations between acquaintances. It is even more so when the relationship is between strangers. The need for accuracy and clarity in the exchange is intensified because strangers have much less basis, aside from their public presentations, upon which to confirm or disconfirm their desired images of self.

Given the complexities involved, it is not surprising that tactical errors occur. And given the intensified importance of clarity and accuracy in the



informational exchange, it is also not surprising that the individual will do all he can to rectify any such errors as quickly as possible.

A tactical error may be said to have occurred whenever the individual, when in the presence of strangers, acts in such a way as to discredit the image of himself which he wishes to project. Errors may result simply from an accidental failure in body control, such as when the individual stumbles or bumps into someone. Or they may be the result of actions based on mis-information, whether about techniques, public settings or people in public settings. In either case the response is embarrassment and, if at all possible, an attempt at immediate rectification.

The problem of mis-information with its potential for error, whether strategic, tactical, or both, was introduced in Chapter II. In this chapter, we shall be concerned with mis-information only as it relates to tactical errors. In addition, we shall be concerned with errors resulting from failure of body control--errors which no amount of correct information can always prevent.

We shall examine tactical errors, first as they occur in the handling of self management, then as they occur in the handling of contact management. There is no attempt to present an exhaustive list of errors or even of types of errors. The goal is merely to examine a few instances of the kinds of things which may go wrong and a number of techniques for seeking recovery when they do. In this, it is the intent to emphasize

once again, the great complexity and difficulty of the task faced by modern man, fighting to protect his fragile self amidst the dangers of the urban public setting.

#### Errors in Self Management

Errors in the tactics of self management seem to be primarily the result of failure of body control, although this is not necessarily the case. It is conceivable that mis-information about the setting, for example, might lead to errors either during the approach or in the midst of the enemy, causing the individual to head in the wrong direction or to act out an inappropriate battle style. But errors of this sort are difficult to ascertain. It would be necessary to know what information the individual possessed prior to entering the setting before one could determine that the information led to the error.

Errors resulting from body control failure are, on the other hand, relatively easy to observe and, in addition are commonly reported as instances of embarrassment. Thus, for example, in a Detroit News article, discussing moments of embarrassment experienced by teenagers, ten of the eighteen incidents reported involved situations of body control failure in the presence of strangers.<sup>2</sup> Included were such matters as sitting down with no chair present, tipping over a desk, becoming entangled in another person's clothing, catching a hand in a fence, and becoming "glued" to a freshly painted bench.

How to handle such public errors? Three possible recovery techniques will be considered: denial, escape and corrective interchange.

Opting for the first alternative, denial, as a response to his error, the individual remains in the setting and simply behaves as if the error had not occurred. He gives no indication, either with words, facial expression or body movement that anything at all has gone wrong. Occurrences of flatulence in public settings are usually handled in this way and denial is probably most often effective when the guilty party cannot be positively identified.

Nevertheless, denial may sometimes be used even when there is no question as to whom is responsible for the error, and persons willing to use this technique in such a situation are said to have great "aplomb".

A second recovery technique for tactical errors in self management is escape. Here, too, the individual may give no indication either verbally or in facial expression that anything is amiss. His admission of the error lies rather in his hasty departure from the scene of his misfortune. In some cases, embarrassment may be expressed through facial expression, but the escape technique never involves any interchange between the offender and his observers.

A third recovery technique, the corrective interchange, whenever possible to use, is probably the most satisfying to the individual, for it results, at its completion, in his re-establishment as an acceptable social being,

as an adequate self.

The concept of the corrective interchange is Erving Goffman's, and he conceives it as a natural sequence of four moves which follow after the commission of an error. First, there is the challenge in which the observers call the error to the attention of the offender. This is followed by the offering, in which the offender is expected to make some correction of, or restitution for, his offense. If the offering is satisfactory, it is accepted and this acceptance constitutes the third move. Finally, the offender gives some demonstration of gratitude to those who have forgiven him.<sup>3</sup>

The first step in the corrective interchange, the challenge, may occur in the two previously mentioned recover techniques as well. But in these cases, the offender blocks any furtherance of the corrective process by either acting as though the error had not occurred, thus refusing to make an offering, or by simply escaping the scene altogether.

The following incident illustrates nicely how the corrective interchange works in rectifying errors of self management.

A man who has been seated at one of the middle tables in an airport cafeteria slides back his chair as though preparing to leave. Apparently attracted by the noise, a young woman seated a short distance away glances at him and sees that as he is rising, he stumbles and is knocked against the edge of the table. He rights himself, glances about, notes that he has been observed. His face reddens slightly, he looks directly at his observer, shrugs his shoulders and smiles. She smiles in response. He nods and moves off.

In this instance, the continuation of the gaze until the offender took note of it constituted the challenge from the observer. She, in effect, said to him, "I saw you commit a blunder which casts doubt on your adequacy as a full, mature, human being." What are you going to do to correct this." The offender, at this point, still had the option to deny the error or to escape the scene. He chose rather, to make an offering, to seek forgiveness. The slight reddening demonstrated that he could recognize his error and feel shame over it. The smile and the shrug expressed this recognition and shame directly to the observer. He said, in effect, "I know I have cast doubt on my adequacy as a full, mature human being. I have no excuse, it was an accident, please accept my apology." The observer could have refused by turning away. But she chose to complete the interchange, communicating her acceptance with a smile. His final nod before departure constituted the fourth and final step of the corrective process-- the "thank you" for forgiveness received.

The need which human beings feel for re-establishment as adequate selves is suggested by the interesting fact that the corrective interchange may sometimes be enacted even when no other person is nearby. In such cases, the offender himself acts out all the parts: challenge, offering, acceptance and thanks. Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he acts it out with the assistance of one of that multitude of imaginary others which each human being carries about. Thus we may

observe a young woman, thrown off balance while opening a door who, after looking up and noting that no one is nearby, initiates a kind of pantomime in which she first frowns, then shrugs, then smiles. It is apparently preferable, should there be any witnesses to this episode, to be judged as someone who carries on private dialogues, than to be judged as a person so insensitive as to have no need for the corrective interchange.

#### Errors in Contact Management

Mis-information and body control failure appear to be of about equal importance for errors in contact management, although the former would seem most relevant for verbal contact, the latter for non-verbal. Whatever the cause of the error, the recovery techniques are the same as those used in self management errors--denial, escape or corrective interchange.

Sometimes denial seems the most appropriate technique, particularly in situations where the error is a minor one. Errors in eye contact are often handled in this way.

Thus, for example, an individual, having become somewhat careless about body control, may allow his eyes to rest on another person in the setting for some few minutes. Should the other look up while the gaze is still fixed on him, eye contact is likely to result. The offender will have been caught in the act of giving more visual attention to a fellow urbanite than is normally deemed proper. He might attempt a recovery through escape or corrective interchange. But the most expeditious technique is denial, for eye contact is

one of the few tactical errors which may be denied with some good chance that the denial will be believed. Using the denial method, the individual does not drop his eyes at the moment of contact (a sure admission of guilt). Rather, after breaking contact, he simply moves his gaze away from the other and continues looking about the setting. This action suggests to the offended party that the individual was not staring, but was rather, engaged in a quite legitimate visual scan of the environment. The contact may then be seen as mere coincidence and the offender is absolved of all responsibility.

In other instances of error, particularly those related to verbal contact, denial is a less satisfactory method. Sometimes, the situation is such that escape seems the only alternative, as in the following two examples.

A young woman, late 20's, middle class, seats herself at one end of a lunch counter in a bus depot. A few minutes later, a working class male, early 30's, sits down beside her, although almost every other stool at the counter is empty. He orders coffee. The woman makes no indication that she has noticed his presence. She stares straight ahead. The man is looking at her in brief, sidelong glances, but she makes no response. After a few moments, he initiates conversation. "You'd think Wells Fargo could run a better schedule than this." The woman glances at him for a second while he is speaking but makes no reply. He has some coins in one hand and investigates these closely before speaking again. "Are you a student or just a traveller." This time she looks at him fully, her face is expressionless. She answers, her voice a monotone. "Just a traveler." Immediately after responding she faces forward again and continues staring straight ahead. He keeps trying. "They say 85% of the business is students." This time there is no response at all; she gives no indication that she has even heard him. He remains a few seconds longer, then gets up, his coffee unfinished, and disappears.

A young woman is seated in the waiting area of a bus depot. One seat removed from her, an elderly Negro woman is sitting, almost covered by several packages, including one rather tattered cardboard hat box. The older woman starts to get up and as she does, the hat box drops into the empty seat. The other observes this and assists in the recovery of the box. As she does so, the older woman says, "I'm looking for someone." Apparently interpreting this as a bid for assistance, she replies, "I'll look after your things if you want to get up." The older woman's face shows anger. She spits out a resounding, "No", and turns away. Her would-be assistant appears uncomfortable and in a few seconds she moves to another seat.

In neither of these cases would denial have been effective. A verbal error had been made and there was no way of pretending it had not. And, interestingly enough, in both cases, any attempt to initiate the corrective interchange would probably have only worsened the situations .

In the first instance, the male had been attempting a pick-up. He had misjudged either body presentation or body language or both, for he would not have initiated interaction had he not anticipated a warm reception. It took several tries at conversation before he could be certain he had made a mistake, and by then he could do nothing but leave the scene. To have begun the corrective process, he would have had to apologize to the woman for his mis-judgment of her and to admit openly that he had been trying to pick her up. That she had been mis-judged, she already knew. That he had been attempting a pick-up, she also knew. And from her response, he was aware that she knew these things. The entire episode was so discrediting to them both,



that to bring it all into the open would have simply increased their mutual discomfort and made a recovery even more difficult.

In the second instance, the older woman had terminated interaction with her would-be helper by her angry, "No." In order to have initiated the corrective interchange, the younger woman would have had to pursue the other and begin interaction anew. But to have done so would have been to demonstrate undue interest in the other and her possessions and would have cast even more suspicion on the young woman's already suspect motives. Under the circumstances, escape proved the most satisfactory technique.

Nevertheless, the corrective interchange probably remains the most satisfactory recovery method whenever it is feasible. As long as the error is not terribly discrediting to either party, the corrective interchange is the most judicious method for insuring full recovery.

It is about noon and all the various eating places in a large bus depot are filled. A young woman has just gone into the coffee shop, standing for a moment just inside the entrance looking for an empty place. She sees none and turns around as though to leave. As she does so, a woman sitting near the entrance addresses her. "Are you looking for someone." The girl shakes her head and resumes her departure.. The woman speaks again. "You're not Ginger are you?" The girl answers no. The woman adds, "I'm looking for someone with your hair color." The girl smiles, the woman smiles, and the girl turns around and leaves.

The woman might have ceased the interaction when she received her first negative reply (which, of course constituted the challenge). But this would have left her in the midst of an error and with no opportunity for recovery. She would have appeared to herself and to the other as a person who initiates contact with perfect strangers for no legitimate reason. Her second question and subsequent explanation of her motives constituted the offering. She legitimated herself, and in demonstrating a felt necessity to make this explanation to a stranger, communicated her apology. The young woman might have continued to walk away, but by remaining to hear the explanation, and then smiling, she demonstrated her acceptance. The older woman, smiling her thanks, was restored to her place as a complete human being. The younger woman was relieved of any feeling of offense.

\* \* \*

The errors described above are only a few of the many which may occur when the individual is engaged in maneuvering in the face of the enemy. The errors mentioned may not be the most serious which can occur. Nor are the recovery techniques described the only ones possible. The description of these errors and the methods used in recovering from them is intended to be suggestive, and to emphasize once again the complexity of the task faced by modern man in the urban setting.

## CHAPTER VI NOTES

1. Birdwhistell, R. L., "Communication Anthropology in the Residency Setting", unpublished paper delivered to ( ).
2. Korona, Jackie, "Was My Face Scarlet When", The Detroit News (Wednesday, March 9, 1966), p. 6F.
3. Goffman, Erving, "On Face Work", Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes, Vol. XVII (August, 1955), pp. 220-221. I have somewhat altered Goffman's conception of the corrective interchange but not to the extent, I believe, that his meaning is distorted. Goffman is primarily concerned with encounters between persons who know one another. As was discussed in Chapter I, among acquaintances there exists a mutually protective social bargain in which each person has a genuine interest in supporting the other's self. Among strangers this does not necessarily obtain. The public bargain is adhered to only when the individual feels it is absolutely essential for his protection. Strangers are quite capable of observing tactical errors without feeling any compunction to assist in the recovery. It is in relation to this fact that I have modified the meaning of the corrective interchange process. Goffman assumes that if the offering is not made by the offender, it will be made by someone else since it is essential to re-establish the equilibrium of the encounter. I do not make this assumption and suggest, instead, that among strangers the offering is entirely up to the offender.

## CHAPTER VII

## NOTES ON THE ECOLOGY OF PUBLIC SETTINGS

Whether involved in managing himself or managing others, the individual's task may be made easier or more difficult, more comforting or more threatening, depending on the ecological arrangement of the setting in which he finds himself.

This chapter examines a number of specific physical arrangements and tries to understand something about how these arrangements may affect the tactical behavior of persons exposed to them. While the present treatment is far from exhaustive, it is sufficient to suggest some important possible relations and types of differences. Perhaps, most important, it establishes the proposition that no battle is fully understood until the details of the battle ground itself are grasped.

We shall look first at some differences which ecological arrangements may make for the tactics of self management; then at the effects such differences may have on contact management.

Ecology and the Tactics of Self Management

The difficulty of the approach maneuver and the potential for error in the execution of it, depends in large measure on the physical arrangement of the setting, particularly that which obtains in the vicinity of the entrance. For example, if there is an area just outside the setting which is screened off from public view, the readiness check may be performed less hastily and less

surreptitiously than if the individual is in full view from the moment of entrance. Some bars and restaurants have small vestibules which serve this purpose. Rest rooms located just inside the setting will do just as well, although this is rarely found.

Some settings are designed so that a "reading" may be taken with considerable ease. If a bench is available just inside the entrance, it becomes possible to take a position at once. The setting may then be scanned at some leisure before the individual is required to move further in. Sometimes glass doors serve a similar purpose, making it possible to get a good look at the setting before ever coming inside.

One of the most helpful arrangements for purposes of the "reading" is the placement of some legitimate object of interest just inside the door. In retail stores, one often finds displays of merchandise so placed. A cart containing sale items or a rack of sport shirts give the person entering an opportunity to stop for a few minutes, investigate the items on display, while at the same time making observations on the "lay of the land."

Taking a position may be simplified if the setting is a relatively complex one, containing within it many potential stopping places. Public libraries and book stores are good examples. Both kinds of settings contain many things to look at so that it is possible to take an initial position just seconds after entering. And since "browsing" is both expected and structurally feasible, the individual can make his way into the setting slowly and carefully; stopping here, stopping

there, until the actual desired position is reached. Thus the kind of rapid, concentrated approach maneuvers one observes in settings like bus depots are not to be seen in libraries. People entering libraries tend to do so with apparent ease, now looking at the card catalogue, now browsing through the magazines, now stopping in front of a new book display. Libraries, of course, have the additional advantage of being highly task oriented so that persons entering receive little attention.

On the other hand, the physical arrangements of some settings render the entire approach maneuver so difficult that one suspects they were designed for that specific purpose. The ladies-ready-to-wear shop described below is a case in point.

Entered through front entrance. There is nothing to look at, no racks of clothing, no items on tables, nothing. There are counters along one side of the store and behind these stand several clerks. As one enters, they immediately look at you and keep you in their gaze all the way through the entire shop. Even within the store, very few items are on display. Apparently there is no browsing allowed in here. If you want to look at something, you have to ask a clerk.

The effect which setting ecology may have on the expression of various battle styles is perhaps already evident and requires little additional comment. The Investigator, for example, needs a good deal of room to move about in and the Nester is most comfortable when sitting down. Crowded busses and subways in which many persons are required to stand, but at the same time are highly restricted in their movements, would seem to be sites of maximum difficulty for self management in the midst of the enemy.

### Ecology and the Tactics of Contact Management

The effect of physical arrangement on the tactics of contact management appear to be greatest at the non-verbal level.

Some settings are designed so as to facilitate contact-free movement. Others, like movie theaters make the problem of routing a difficult one. Moving to a seat in a theater across a row of people can be a genuine struggle if one wishes to avoid body contact as much as possible. One suspects that the annoyance expressed over having to let people pass in a theater has less to do with any momentary interruption of the view of the performance than with an abhorrence of the body contact that is almost always the inevitable result.

Seating and eye contact problems vary considerably from setting to setting. Restaurants where all the tables are arranged in one large open space greatly intensify the necessity to manage eye gaze. On the other hand, restaurants which contain high booths, planters and room dividers simplify the problem of eye management and in some cases eliminate it all together. Some restaurants make it a habit of placing two tables together so that during periods of crowding, sets of strangers may find themselves, in effect, sitting at one table. This practice greatly increases the entire non-verbal management problem and one may often observe persons indicating a preference to wait rather than undergo such close contact with perfect strangers. The difficulty is not that one may be sitting next to a stranger, for this

is common at counters and creates no special problems. The difficulty arises rather out of the necessity to sit across the table from a stranger so that each time one looks up, the other is directly within the line of vision.

Settings in which all the seats face in the same direction may also have the effect of eliminating eye management problems. In such settings as theaters and auditoriums, the entrance problem is also simplified. On the other hand, movie theaters, because they are darkened, create special problems for seating decisions. Both lone males and lone females must pay particular attention to the meaning which any given seating decision may have for those around them.

The effect of physical arrangement on verbal contact management may most clearly be seen in retail stores. The increasing popularity of the self-service market may be as much a response to the desire of urbanites to avoid contact with strangers as to economic efficiency. Unlike the situation in restaurants where contact with an employee may involve no more than placing an order and receiving it, interaction with a clerk in a retail store may be rather prolonged. Purchasing can be a rather personal act, involving considerations and self-expressions that one might prefer not to have to share with a stranger. Thus, for example, some women may avoid dress shops in which they know they will never be left alone. Rather than expose such matters as their dress size, type of undergarments, figure failures, etc., to the eyes of an



impersonal clerk, they simply do their shopping elsewhere.

Self service stores also eliminate the possibility of appearing inadequate or uninformed in the presence of strangers. The self service meat market is an interesting example. The woman who does her purchasing from a butcher is required to know a good deal about various cuts of meats: how they are packaged, how much is required to serve how many and so on. In the more personal society of the small town where one might know the butcher, any inadequacy in such knowledge might be overlooked. But in the anonymity of the city, to make an error about meats is to threaten the image of oneself as adequate or worthy. A woman entering a butcher shop in a large city and ordering a pound of spare ribs will suffer the embarrassment of being told by the butcher, in the presence of many strangers, that spare ribs are not cut into units that small and that even if they were, they would not contain enough meat for one meal. In a self service meat market, no such errors are possible. Everything is pre-packaged, the choices have already been narrowed. And if one should still make an error, it will be discovered only in the privacy of one's own home.

One might hypothesize that the retail store which fails to allow a good deal of browsing before forcing the customer to interact with a clerk is doomed to economic failure. The exception is perhaps the highly specialized store in which the clientele is small and the relationship between clerks and customers is a personal one.

Very expensive dress shops have this character, as do stamp and rock collection shops. But for the retail store which depends on a mass clientele, the practice of greeting the customer at the door and staying with him all the time he is present may very well be a thing of the past.

CHAPTER VIII  
CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has been the intent and the hope of this study to contribute, in at least a modest way, to the sociological understanding of urban life. Cities of all sizes and types--from those which were small towns only yesterday, to those whose history as great metropolitan complexes extends back a hundred years--are all an important part of the modern world. The "experience of the city" is one which is shared by ever increasing numbers of men. If sociology is to come closer to its elusive goal--a clearer conception of man's curious ways--then surely it must seek to understand something about this "experience of the city" which is so important a part of the lives of so many.

Georg Simmel recognized this, as did Robert Park and Louis Wirth. These men understood the city to be a fantastically complex and in many ways totally unique social arrangement, which, if it was to be grasped, must be approached from a variety of perspectives, using a variety of methods and addressing a variety of problems. In "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment", Robert Park laid out page after page of questions about cities and urban life which needed to be answered. He felt it was important to know everything that could be known, from the sources of the city's population, to the social rituals of neighborhoods to the social organization of "moral areas."<sup>1</sup> And Louis Wirth in "Urbanism as a Way of

Life," urged his fellow sociologists to appreciate that the city was many things: a physical structure, a system of social organization; a set of ideas and attitudes and a constellation of personalities.<sup>2</sup>

Although much work has been done on the city, much has been left undone. There has been great concern with its physical and demographic characteristics, with its great institutions and with its plethora of problems. But there has been very little concern with the "experience of the city," with its meaning for and effect on, the day to day, minute to minute lives of the people who call it home.

It is out of a desire to know something of the "experience of the city" that this study has been written. I have attempted to understand something of what it means to live in a world peopled by strangers. I have sought to comprehend some part of how it is possible to survive, even for brief stretches of time, in a world where the solid supports and reassurances of face-to-face social life are missing. I have suggested that part of the "experience of the city" is the acquisition and practice of a complex set of techniques which are used to render this world of strangers a less alien and more hospitable place. And, I have suggested that man survives because his techniques grow out of, and are the behavioral expressions of, a set of conventions which are shared by the residents of the urban world and which function to give that world sufficient predictability to make human life, if not always pleasant, at least possible.

But what has been said here only scratches the surface. It has been possible only to hint at, and then, only now and again, the nature of only a few of the rules which guide strangers in their relations with one another. The descriptions of the techniques themselves must be understood as being tentative and incomplete; the assertion of the very existence of these techniques is only a preliminary postulate. Many questions remain unanswered, many more unasked.

Yet one thing may be said with some degree of certainty. Regardless of whether the reasons for man's behavior are the ones which I have presented, the fact remains that his behavior in public settings is awesomely complex. Whatever the reasons for all his maneuvering, the fact remains that he is constantly at it. He is moving, gazing, avoiding, staring, fumbling, reading, investigating, scanning, talking, eating, writing, laughing, frowning, gesturing, questioning, rearranging, repairing, checking, smoothing, and combing from the moment he enters a public setting until the moment he leaves. And anyone who takes the time to observe all this cannot help but come away amazed and wondering at the meaning of it all.

## CHAPTER VIII NOTES

1. from Human Communities (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1952), pp. 13-51.
2. from Louis Wirth on Cities & Social Life, Albert J. Reiss, Jr., ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 60-83.

## APPENDIX

## A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The techniques utilized by modern urban man in his attempt to neutralize the dangers of the public setting are probably not fully conscious. I do not mean to suggest that they are "unconscious" for I suspect that at certain times, in situations calling for careful handling, we are acutely aware of them. However, most people, most of the time, utilize these techniques without being conscious that they are doing so. They are part of our everyday equipment for living and we give them no more thought than we do our ability to walk. They represent a part of what Edward T. Hall has called the "informal" aspects of culture.<sup>1</sup>

If we were to ask a man to describe in detail how he handles himself among strangers or what rules he follows in guiding his behavior, the response would most likely at best be a few superficial statements; at worst, a look of incomprehension. Much of his behavior in such situations, the rules that guide it and the reasons underlying it exist out-of-awareness, are part of "knowledge felt" rather than "knowledge understood."<sup>2</sup> Thus, to learn about these behaviors, rules and reasons, we cannot depend on what the actors tell us but must utilize other methods.

Much of the material employed in this study was collected through direct observation. Some 200 hours were spent in four main observation sites in and around Ann Arbor, Michigan. These were the Greyhound Bus Depot,

the Willow Run Airport, the "Fishbowl" between Mason and Haven Halls on the University of Michigan campus, and the Ann Arbor public library. In addition, some observation was conducted aboard Greyhound busses, at the Detroit, Michigan bus depot, and on the streets and in the stores of downtown Ann Arbor. Supplementary information was drawn from personal communications and published materials.

I observed behavior in public places by merely entering a public setting, positioning myself in what appeared to be an advantageous spot and beginning to record as much as I could of what was taking place around me. With minor exceptions (to be discussed below) no difficulties arose in the collection of the data. In each of the settings strangers are the rule rather than the exception and the unobtrusive observer simply blends into the scenery. In the four main sites mentioned above it is expected that persons will "hang around" for various periods of time so that again the observer in no way violates legitimate expectations. Many persons in these settings are engaged in private tasks and it was, therefore, possible to take complete notes on the spot and with little attempt at camouflage. Only on the streets and in the stores of downtown Ann Arbor was it necessary to limit myself to a few brief notations, waiting until later to write up a more complete account.

It should be emphasized that had the rules of these settings not allowed for on-the-spot note taking, meaningful observation would have been precluded. The subject matter of these observations--how persons dress,



where they seat themselves, how they handle their bodies, how they occupy themselves, etc.--are far too complex and detailed to be held in memory for even a brief period of time.

While faulty memory cannot be seen as a source of data distortion, it is possible that faulty and/or selective perception can. This observation was un-systematic in the sense that it was not guided by any pre-determined, pre-coded schedule. In entering these settings, I was guided only by a desire to see what could be seen. My object was to study behavior in public places and the formulation of research objectives was no more formalized than that. At first, I attempted to record everything within my line of vision. As the study progressed and certain interesting areas called themselves to my attention, I would concentrate on one particular kind of behavior and then another. Seating patterns and entrance behavior are two examples of such concentration. But even in the final days of observation, the emphasis was on gathering as much and as many different kinds of material as I could. It goes without saying that I missed much of what was going on around me. It is simply not possible to see "everything" much less record it. My eye was drawn to certain types of behaviors and ignored others; certain individuals were watched more closely than others; and some settings (the bus depots and air terminal ) seemed to provide the greatest variety of data and thus were favored over other, less stimulating locales. Thus, there is good reason to suspect that I may have concentrated on much that is

trivial and skimmed over or completely ignored much that is important. But such are the dangers of exploratory research and I feel strongly that the rich data which were obtained are justification enough for facing such difficulties.

Some few words are perhaps in order regarding the use of Ann Arbor, Michigan as a site in which to seek some understanding of urban life. While in many respects, Ann Arbor retains many of the characteristics of a small town, the fact that it is the site of a giant university, containing thousands of students who are strangers to one another and to the townspeople, coupled with the fact that it is experiencing extremely rapid growth, give it many of the characteristics of more metropolitan communities. In addition, the University attracts a population of both students and faculty that is characterized by diversity in race, national background, original class standing and prior experience. While the age range and present class standing of the population of Ann Arbor is hardly typical of most metropolitan areas, the city still shares enough characteristics with urban centers to justify it as a site for this research.

In only two instances were there any difficulties involved in the collection of data, and in both instances the difficulties were as much the result of my own internal state as the result of any external obstacles.

The first difficulty arose as I attempted some observations of street behavior. I was particularly interested in routing at that time and I was looking for a spot that would give me a good view of people

walking along the street. I discovered to my surprise, that in downtown Ann Arbor there were no places where one might just sit for awhile (a situation which has since been corrected). In fact, the only seating space available was that provided by the bus stop benches. I decided to use the benches, but after four or five different tries, I gave up in despair. I found that observation from these benches was absolutely impossible. I could not get over the idea that the benches were provided for the use of people waiting for a bus. And I would no sooner sit down than I would begin to worry over what might happen if a bus were to pull up without my seeing it, and were to stop to let me board. I was so nervous over this possibility that I spent all my time on the benches looking out for approaching busses, with the result, of course, that there was no time left to look at anything else.

The second difficulty arose during the course of observations at the Willow Run Airport. I had been appearing there quite regularly, often remaining in the setting for prolonged periods of time without attracting any attention. The terminal is large and complex with great numbers of people coming and going most of the time. In addition, persons are often required to wait between planes for long periods so I had every reason to believe that no special notice would be made of my rather long visits. This appeared to be the case until one morning, after having been in the terminal for some three or four hours, I decided to chart

the table arrangement of a "French Cafe" type restaurant which is located in the center of the terminal. It is enclosed only by a low picket fence so that it is completely visible from most sections of the terminal. However, wishing to chart it accurately, I went up to the picket fence and stood there sketching for some ten minutes (the restaurant was closed at this time). With this completed I returned to one of the waiting areas for further observation. Within minutes after sitting down I was approached by a man I had earlier identified as an employee--possibly the custodial manager. He had apparently seen me sketching and asked, in what I felt to be a most suspicious tone, if he could help me with the terminal. I said, no, and he left but a short time later I noticed him talking to a man in a business suit and pointing in my direction. I have no idea what he thought I was doing and nothing more was said, but I found the incident unnerving and after that day made no further trips to the terminal.

There was always a slight fear in the back of my mind that I might be arrested for vagrancy, or some such. Such fears are undoubtedly groundless, but the fact that I experienced them says something about the kinds of forces which discourage setting mis-use. Interestingly enough, the site in which I spent the most time--the bus depot--was one of the smallest and I have no doubt that my presence was noted by both employees and colonizers. Nevertheless, nothing was ever said. The depot was always so full of persons who made it a second home that apparently the addition of one more simply

didn't matter.

As should be evident from the text of this study, women alone in public settings, particularly for prolonged periods of time, are more subject to suspicion than are men. Assuming the role of sociological observer did not protect me from concern that as a woman my presence might be mis-interpreted. I was very hesitant to observe in the bus depot at night when busses are few and far between and I made no attempt to use bars or restaurants as observation sites for fear of incidents. In retrospect, however, I feel that I did not come anywhere near exploiting the full potential of any of the settings I did use, nor did I test the full range of possible sites. My own fears kept me from finding out all the places a lone woman might safely go, as well as how long she might safely stay after her arrival.

As should be implicit in all that has been said in the preceding pages, the potential for research in public settings is very great. And, if it is true, as I have argued, that urban public settings are dangerous to man's mental health, then to understand how he survives in these settings is a genuinely important task.

None of my observations were systematically made and there is much potential in public settings for systematic study. The methods used by Robert Sommer in looking at seating patterns among the acquainted, might work as well among strangers. Ray Birdwhistell has used slow motion film to study body language and while he uses a laboratory setting, there is no reason why the same method could not

be used in a natural environment. If Candid Camera can use hidden cameras, there is no reason why sociologists could not do the same. Routing and entrance behavior (the entire approach sequence) are two areas of study in which the motion picture camera would be particularly useful. The whole area of the ecology of public settings--or micro-ecology--deserves a great deal of further attention. Gregory Stone has done some work on how shoppers feel about certain types of stores<sup>3</sup>, but he did not specifically concern himself with the way in which the physical layout of the store might affect these feelings. I suspect that it would be possible to get some of this data through interviewing. At least my own experience suggests that the feelings of comfort or discomfort in one setting or another are quite conscious.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the methods used, there is much to be learned about public settings, about the behavior of men in the presence of strangers.

## APPENDIX NOTES

1. Hall, Edward T., The Silent Language (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1959).
2. Fraser, J. T., ed., The Voices of Time (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. xxi.
3. Stone, Gregory P., "City Shoppers and Urban Identification: Observations on the Social Psychology of City Life", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. LX (July, 1954), 36-45.
4. For additional methods which might be used in public setting research, the reader is referred to a fascinating little book: Eugene J. Webb, et. al., Unobtrusive Measures: Nonreactive Research in the Social Sciences, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966).