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## **PASSING MOMENTS: Some Social Dynamics of Pedestrian Interaction**

NICHOLAS H. WOLFINGER

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Pedestrian interaction is inherently complex yet observably ordered. For order to be possible, people must behave like competent pedestrians and must expect copresent others to act accordingly. Although many researchers have examined pedestrian behavior, few have considered exactly how pedestrians develop and sustain the expectation that others will indeed behave like competent pedestrians. Using ethnographic data, the author shows how these expectations emerge in the specific practices that comprise pedestrian behavior. Various researchers have attributed pedestrian order to the existence of a tacit contract between users of public space. The author's findings extend the implications of this work by explicating the social and collaborative processes by which users of public space come to trust each other to act like competent pedestrians.

## PASSING MOMENTS

### Some Social Dynamics of Pedestrian Interaction

NICHOLAS H. WOLFINGER

ANY BRIEF FORAY onto a public sidewalk reveals a dynamism that is subtle and sophisticated yet routinely taken for granted. Goffman (1971) noted the importance of this intriguing phenomenon:

Take, for example, techniques that pedestrians employ in order to avoid bumping into one another. These seem of little significance. However, there are an appreciable number of such devices; they are *constantly* in use and they cast a pattern on street behavior. Street traffic would be a shambles without them. (p. 6; emphasis in original)

A fundamental characteristic of public interaction, then, is the complex production of order. But from where does this order come? Various researchers have attributed it to the existence

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of an implicit covenant between users of public space. Lofland (1972a, 94, 96; 1972b, 226-27) provides one such explanation in her theory of the *bargain* (see also Lofland 1973, 1989, 1995). Lofland suggests that all users of public places employ a variety of survival skills to protect their "fragile selves." They extend this protection to copresent others, who are concerned with their own fragile selves. Collective allegiance to this bargain allows strangers to coexist peacefully in public places.

Lofland's formulation of the bargain is curiously individualistic. Although elsewhere (Lofland 1989, 1995), she explicitly argues for the social character of public space interaction, her characterization of the bargain emphasizes individual self-protection rather than the cooperation necessary to maintain a commonly desired condition. Perhaps cognizant of this shortcoming, Karp, Stone, and Yoels (1977, 109-11) offer a more social vision of public interaction. They draw on Lofland's work to form their "mini-max" theory: pedestrians tacitly cooperate to minimize involvement while maximizing social order. This cooperation allows public interaction to function successfully.

Goffman (1971) also emphasizes cooperation in providing perhaps the most sophisticated explanation for order in public places. He describes in detail the form of the interpersonal collaboration responsible for order. When social rules are broken, people generally attend to their repair. This ritualized repair strengthens belief in the broken rule (Goffman 1971, 113), so *remedial ritual* forms an important mechanism for sustaining order in interaction.

Goffman's discussion of remedial ritual glosses over pedestrian behavior, a topic he addresses elsewhere in detail (see especially Goffman 1971, 3-27). He does not describe systematically the remedial rituals at play in pedestrian interaction, nor does he show how they ultimately lead to order in public places. Likewise, pedestrian interaction has not been the main focus for other students of public life; it constitutes just one small part of what has generally, if loosely, been defined as "social life in the public realm."<sup>1</sup>

As a specialized domain of public life, pedestrian order depends essentially on two social rules: (1) people must behave

like competent pedestrians and (2) people must trust copresent others to behave like competent pedestrians. Many authors (e.g., Collett and Marsh 1974; Goffman 1971; Whyte 1988; Wolff 1973) have examined in detail the physical dynamics of pedestrian behavior encompassed by the first of the two rules. None have examined how pedestrians come to trust others to act like competent pedestrians.

In this article, I use ethnographic data to explore how pedestrians attend to infractions of order. I refine Lofland's theory of the bargain by describing how users of public spaces sustain the belief that others will indeed act like competent pedestrians. This reveals the bargain's intrinsically social character by showing how it depends on pedestrians collaborating to produce trust.<sup>2</sup>

## METHODS

I collected data for this article exclusively by first-person observation. Several times a week, I rollerskated approximately six miles in commuting to and from the University of California, Los Angeles campus. After skating, I recorded field notes. In total, I recorded fifty-five encounters with pedestrians in segments ranging from several sentences to several pages long.

Prior research finds that personal characteristics such as gender (Collett and Marsh 1974; Dabbs and Stokes 1975; Sobel and Lillith 1975; Wolff 1973) and race (Anderson 1990) sometimes influence pedestrian interactions. Given this, I describe myself here. I was a five-foot eight-inch White male of average build in my mid-twenties at the time of the data collection. I usually wore shorts and a T-shirt. Whatever influence these characteristics had on the interactions I describe in this article, it arguably pales in comparison to the effects of my rollerskating.

Rollerskating presents many challenges to the normal order of public space interaction that are unrelated to the rollerskater's persona. The characteristic weaving motion of a rollerskater makes him or her seem out of control. A skater moves quickly, and so pedestrians may be surprised and have less

time to resolve an incipient problem. Collisions are potentially more consequential.

The challenges rollerskating poses to pedestrians allowed me special insight into the organization of public interaction. When rollerskating, I created many situations where normal pedestrian order broke down. This provided me with diverse opportunities to examine the social dynamics of trust in public space. Considerable sociological precedent exists for studying socially organized phenomena by disrupting order (Garfinkel 1963, 1967) and this method has frequently been extended to interaction in public places (Dabbs and Stokes 1975; Sobel and Lillith 1975; Stilitz 1969; Wolff 1973).

### **NEGOTIATING THE PEDESTRIAN BARGAIN**

Why do people believe that other users of public places will behave like pedestrians? In large part, this expectation results from the great bulk of pedestrian interactions that proceed without incident. But problems sometimes occur, and when they do remedial measures are necessary. These remedial measures ultimately restore and sustain faith in the bargain. In the following sections, I explore some of the situations in which pedestrian interactions may become problematic and consider the remedial measures used in these situations.

#### **SAFE PASSAGES**

In many pedestrian encounters, the issue of trust never explicitly arises. People are quite good at being pedestrians. They can often execute evasive maneuvers without breaking stride or visibly losing composure. Interactions proceed without problems, and so the tacit, mutually held expectation that people will behave like pedestrians does not get tested.

Even when interactions require the active involvement of participants, unproblematic resolutions often occur. Sometimes pedestrians are observably preoccupied. If they remained ob-

servably preoccupied when I passed them, I inferred that I did not disturb them. One time I approached from behind a man who was reading as he walked.

I was approaching a man who was walking in a street. . . . As I neared him, he angled all the way to the left-hand side of the road without changing his speed. He never looked behind him and remained absorbed in some papers.

As he never stopped reading, yielding probably did not unsettle the man. Because he apparently reacted to me with so little difficulty, I did not apologize for having made him yield.

Another time I found myself skating directly toward a pedestrian. Each of us moved to avoid the other, but neither he nor I broke stride or discernibly lost composure.

The pedestrian . . . was walking directly toward me. . . . I was fairly close to him when the interaction proper took place. . . . There was no sense of having avoided a collision following the resolution. . . . I angled over to the left-hand side of the sidewalk to avoid him. . . . This had more of the feel of plotting a path than of desperately avoiding a predicament. As I shifted to the left, he also moved to my left, so that for an instant we were heading toward each other. He then moved back into his original course. . . . His movements . . . could [not] be thought of as panicked. After he returned to his original course, we passed without incident.

Both the pedestrian and I apparently managed this passage without trouble. Neither of us apologized. We both acted in accordance with expectations for pedestrian behavior, so trust never arose as an explicit issue.

Many encounters occur like these two. People successfully perform as pedestrians and the interaction proceeds without incident. The expectation that others will act like pedestrians is not challenged. Safe passages thus sustain the bargain.

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies provide means for restoring trust when it is threatened. By apologizing, a pedestrian admits to having breached

this trust. He or she reaffirms his or her status as a competent pedestrian for the benefit of both the offender and the offended. Apologies sustain the bargain upholding public order; if no one apologized, people would have no faith that others will uphold the bargain.

Apologies need not be verbal; pedestrians can show their regrets in a number of ways. Under the rubric of "body gloss," Goffman (1971) describes several varieties of nonverbal communication. These include nonverbal apologies, which Goffman (1971, 128) suggests may be especially effective in conveying sincere contrition. Body gloss also shows its displayer to be a competent user of his or her body (Goffman 1971, 129), often a pertinent issue in pedestrian encounters. For this reason, pedestrians frequently offer nonverbal apologies when trust breaks down. One particularly contrite woman offered me simultaneous verbal and nonverbal apologies, apparently because she saw herself as being in my way.

She looked at me (we made brief eye contact) and apologized, saying "sorry." She then said "sorry" again. Her affect wasn't overly apologetic, but she did "say it like she meant it." As she apologized, she walked slightly more quickly, giving the impression that she, having in her mind "transgressed" against me, was now trying to "pay restitution" by symbolically yielding (that is, . . . [making a show of] scurrying to get out of my way).

Apologies do not always come at the end of encounters. By sustaining trust during a crucial moment, an apology may allow an interaction to continue with no additional trouble. Mid-interaction apologies often assume the form of a deferential movement to one side. These movements can both secure safe passage and show the mover to be a competent pedestrian. Correspondingly, these deferrals often hold the deferred person accountable for a reciprocal display of appreciation. These elaborate interchanges reveal how public interaction can depend on the active negotiation of trust.

Deference-and-appreciation sequences occur frequently in public places. One time, a woman with children and I were moving directly toward each other on a narrow sidewalk.

I moved to the right to facilitate our passage. . . . [I] made a big production of angling my body toward the wall [to my right] so as to maximize the room the woman and her brood needed to pass. This motion was comic in its overstatement, and the woman and I exchanged smiles as I passed.

By moving to one side, I comfortably passed the woman and her children and presented myself as a competent user of public space. Afterward, we consecrated this enactment of trust with smiles of mutual appreciation.

Yielding does not always convey an implicit apology. Sometimes the deferential party might just be employing the easiest available means for resolving a dilemma. One pedestrian stepped out of my way apparently because an intervening causeway was not wide enough to accommodate both of us simultaneously.

I approached a causeway. . . . A man was nearing the end of the causeway as I approached and was already walking to one side of the causeway, so that there was ample room for us to pass. When I was fairly far away from him, though, he made a big production of stepping closer to the wall he was already near and slowing down to facilitate my passing. This action seemed calculated and not reflexive, as I was fairly far away from the pedestrian and not approaching quickly. Also, his expression did not suggest urgency. It seemed as if the pedestrian anticipated the need to move aside, even when no such need existed. His action also seemed defensive. . . . [This] gentleman clearly gave the impression (in his facial expression and body movements) that he was withdrawing to protect himself.

It follows that in not offering an apologetic line, the yielder may blame the person yielded to for being in the way. In this case, the yielder may expect a display of appreciation such as an apology. Alternately, pedestrians sometimes look challenged and refuse to yield. I discuss these cases later.

Encounters sometimes become problematic because one participant fails to play his or her part correctly. When this happens, an apology makes explicit what is usually taken for granted: pedestrian interaction depends on the continuing maintenance of trust. Apologies can also allow problematic



encounters to proceed with no additional troubles. By receiving apologies frequently, all pedestrians get regular reminders that other users of public space are indeed competent pedestrians. As we shall see, apologies are part and parcel of certain routinely problematic varieties of public space interactions.

## SURPRISES

Pedestrians trust others to make their presence known. Surprises threaten this trust. When pedestrians are surprised, they generally react negatively, often by showing fear or annoyance and occasionally by showing anger. In turn, these negative reactions commonly beget apologies. As Goffman (1967, 19-20) points out, when made aware of a transgression in face-to-face interaction, an offender normally tries to make things right.

Pedestrians often are most surprised when they actively expect not to be surprised. People are competent pedestrians; when they view interactions as resolved, they probably are. If apparent resolution is subsequently negated, the consequences will likely be greater. Having been recently enacted, the ubiquitous expectation of trust presumably holds greater significance for its enactors.

One time I bumped into a woman after I had apparently achieved closure with her.

The woman somehow conveyed to me that she was yielding and that I should proceed. . . . I recall feeling certain of having secured clear passage (as a product of her gesture), inducing me to proceed toward the counter. At this point, I put her out of my mind. My concern with negotiating passage had ended, and I hadn't seen any need for follow-up (i.e., thanking her, seeking additional verification that my clear passage had been secured, etc.). My surprise was considerable when I unexpectedly bumped into her. The impact was minimal: we lightly brushed arms. . . . The impact was completely unexpected. I didn't see her coming, [not] even for an instant before impact: I didn't have a momentary flash of the helpless dread . . . that often precedes collisions. . . . I said "sorry." . . . She muttered something back, and we went our separate ways.

I failed to behave like a competent user of public space because I had forsaken concern for the woman when I brushed her. By subsequently exchanging pleasantries, the woman and I both displayed attentiveness to the infraction of trust.

Sometimes pedestrians act surprised for no apparent reason. In one case, a man indicated that he saw me, then subsequently acted surprised.

There was ample room for me to comfortably pass him. In our present courses, enough lateral distance separated us. . . . I was probably about fifteen feet behind the pedestrian when he turned his head (to the right) to look at me. His speed did not change when he first turned to look at me—he kept walking. I looked at him as he turned his head. My speed didn't change appreciably during these moments. . . . After I looked at him, I caught his gaze for a brief instant. . . . I was probably about ten feet from him when he reacted. Just after he caught my gaze he turned his head back. He then jumped several feet to the left, all the way to the edge of the sidewalk. His jump was surprising (to me), and [he] seemed amazingly startled.

Before showing surprise, this man seemingly acknowledged my presence by catching my gaze. I had inferred that he had acknowledged my presence. Therefore I did not see myself as being at fault for his distress, and so I did not apologize. From my perspective, he was the one who had not behaved like a competent pedestrian.

Sometimes I clearly surprised pedestrians. When this happened, I generally apologized. One time I surprised a stationary pedestrian who apparently did not see me approaching.

I was skating down a sidewalk toward a corner, where I planned to turn left. . . . The sidewalk was pretty steep, and had been for some distance, so I was moving pretty quickly. . . . After I had rolled down the sidewalk a little way, a woman walked to the corner. . . . She became visible just as she reached the corner.

As I got nearer, I saw her simply continuing to stand there, waiting (apparently for the light to change). . . . Since I was moving quickly, I was slaloming/weaving. For these reasons, I doubtless seemed like an oncoming hazard to the woman, even though I was moving to avoid her.

. . . When she actively acknowledged my presence she seemed pretty surprised and panicked. Her first move was quickly to dodge one way. . . . We then engaged in a brief l-move-left-she-moves-left-l-move-right-she-moves-right dance. . . . The woman looked somewhat frantic. . . . This woman's movements didn't seem calculated (to the degree where it would appear like: "He's going to skate left, so I'll go right"). She just took quick little steps. . . . Overall, her movements had a sort of panicked yet helpless feel.

Finally, I passed to the outside, far away from her. . . . By the time I passed she had regained some composure, enabling her to get as far away from me as possible. The last glance I got of her told me that some of her panic had seemingly given way to glowering, silent anger. Feeling bad for what I had put her through, I apologized as I skated away.

I surprised the woman, and so I apologized. She looked quite irate; I had startled her and violated the bargain. Even if my apology did not mollify her, it showed that I had not intended to frighten her and was contrite for having done so nevertheless. This allowed me to view myself as a competent pedestrian despite her apparently differing view.

In some encounters involving surprises, trust issues are more complicated. All participants might violate the bargain in different ways. One time I skated toward a woman who apparently did not see me until I got very close to her.

As I approached, I looked at her. She was preoccupied with examining the store windows she was passing. Her examination seemed somewhat ineffectual: she was looking as she walked and giving the impression that the process of looking was more important than the substantive focus of her gaze. In other words, she seemed to be in something of a studious reverie. Right as I neared her, I think my awareness had developed to the point where I hoped that she would notice me. That is, it now seemed strange that she hadn't. . . . When I was only a couple of feet in front of her, she finally noticed me. . . . I didn't come so close to her that it was too uncomfortable a passage. When she noticed me, she moved slightly away from me, toward the outside of the sidewalk. . . . I can best describe her reaction as slightly surprised and slightly annoyed. . . . I, possibly feeling apologetic or slightly guilty at having been "caught"—that's what it seemed like to me at the time—might have had a more significant reaction.

I expected the woman to see me, as I was skating toward her in broad daylight. I saw that no intervening obstacles blocked her view of me. Still, she did not discernibly acknowledge my presence. As I approached her, I became uneasy. I saw the woman as not acting like a competent pedestrian, thereby establishing the possibility for trouble to develop. When this woman finally reacted to me, she seemed somewhat irate. I had surprised her; because I did not alert her to my presence, the woman saw me as having violated the bargain. I realized this and, as a competent pedestrian, I apologized for surprising her.

Surprises make trust issues explicit and therefore provide valuable heuristic opportunities. Pedestrians are obligated to make their presence known and to keep alert to the approach of others. Surprises simultaneously test and make explicit these obligations. Apologies often follow surprises. Apologies display awareness that a transgression has occurred and therefore serve an important role in the maintenance of trust.

## PASSING

Skating behind a pedestrian or pedestrians for a period of time without passing evokes distinct trust issues. Pedestrians generally expect a skater to move faster and skate past them. They often appeared to become uncomfortable when I skated behind them. There are two possible reasons for this discomfort. First, I represented a latent threat; I had no good reason to be "back there," and so pedestrians often saw me as representing an intangible danger and therefore violating the bargain. Second, pedestrians might have seen themselves as in my way. Skating behind pedestrians apparently produced one or both of these results in almost all situations except those where I was constrained to move in the same fashion as pedestrians (such as in heavy crowds).

During my research, I frequently found myself skating behind pedestrians. One time I approached a woman from behind as she walked down a crowded sidewalk. I remained behind her, and her unease apparently mounted as she repeatedly verified the presence of the prospective menace to her rear.

I was behind her and slightly to her left. When I was about four feet behind her I slowed (to avoid hitting her) by dragging my wheels. Dragging my wheels made a scraping sound. The woman turned her head to look at me but did not show any expression in doing so. Her eyes met mine for an instant, then she glanced down at my skates for an equal period of time. She did this as she walked: she did not alter her speed or course.

. . . I continued to drag my wheels intermittently to maintain a constant distance behind the woman—about four feet. By doing so, my speed remained about that of a pedestrian. As I continued behind this woman, she again turned, without stopping, to look at me.

I ended up passing the woman before she actually yielded. When I held my position, sequences like this almost invariably culminated in the pedestrian yielding.

I often skated behind pedestrians on ramps or narrow sidewalks. The pedestrians involved generally yielded when I lingered behind them, especially in situations where I had no other means of passing them (and they realized this). In the following example, I skated onto a descending ramp, only to find myself trapped behind two pedestrians. I slowed until I was skating at their speed, remaining at a constant distance behind them.

The pedestrian to my right was . . . [male], the other was female. They were walking at a lateral distance suggesting friendship. . . . When I first slowed, they did not turn around. As I continued down the ramp though (still making more noise than usual, because of my wheel dragging), the man turned to look at me. In doing so, he slowed but didn't stop. He did move to the right somewhat, somehow encouraging me (though I can't remember exactly how) to pass him and descend the ramp—that he would yield to permit my passage. . . . I, somewhat apologetically, . . . [told] him to continue down the ramp without regard to my presence. . . . After this portion of the interaction, the couple continued walking down the ramp. I followed at a constant distance, scraping my wheels to hold my speed constant. This continued for only a few more feet, though, when the man turned around and again indicated that I should proceed. . . . I finally thanked the man and rolled ahead of both of them.

I apparently made these pedestrians uncomfortable by skating behind them. This discomfort could have resulted from either

or both of two reasons. First, the man might have seen me as being an incompetent user of public space. By skating behind him, I represented a threat, violating his tacit expectation that I should uphold the bargain. Second, the man might have seen himself as an incompetent pedestrian for blocking my path. Either way, the man acted to resolve a situation that threatened trust.

One important rule of pedestrian behavior is to avoid being in the way of others. When I tested this expectation by skating behind pedestrians, they almost always yielded. These passing moments also show that the passer must signal his or her approach. Unproblematic passages thus require pedestrians to cooperate. Botched passages often engendered apologies, which demonstrated further the importance of trust issues in pedestrian interaction.

## CONTESTS

Contests occasionally occur in pedestrian interactions, evoking distinct trust issues. In pedestrian life, a contest takes place when two or more interactants each sense a challenge and infer that the other persons involved also sense it. Given the contrasting speed and mobility of a skater among pedestrians, it does not seem surprising that pedestrians sometimes challenged me. Goffman (1967, 240-41) identifies such challenges as "character contests":

The territories of the self have boundaries that cannot be literally patrolled. Instead, border disputes are sought out and indulged in (often with glee) as a means of establishing where one's boundaries are. And these disputes are character contests.

One encounter during my research evolved into a veritable game of "chicken." This interaction occurred in an area completely devoid of relevant obstacles (including uninvolved pedestrians).

I was approaching two burly jock types, and I looked straight at them as I approached. They looked right back at me the whole

time. As I approached, I had the feeling we were playing "chicken." We kept looking at each other, and their expressions became somewhat surly. Finally, when I got fairly close to them, close enough that I got uncomfortable . . . I veered off. They did not change their course at all.

Sometimes contests can be more subtle. On one occasion a pedestrian and I raced to reach a particular spot ahead of both of us. Only at the last moment did I come to see this interaction as a contest.

As I approached and saw the pedestrian moving toward the spot, the nature of the interaction became clear in my mind. When I first saw the guy, I think this was clear to him also. He was looking at me as he walked to the spot, somehow conveying the impression that he was competing to be first and that he was rushing to combat the apprehension that he wouldn't be.

When I first saw him, I thought that he had the inside track to being first, in that he was closer and moving fairly quickly for a pedestrian. I experienced a couple of moments thinking that I should capitulate and yield by slowing down. I then became seized by a feeling of righteousness: "I can be there first." Accordingly, I sped up, beating the guy to the spot and cutting him off (he had to stop for a moment as I passed).

According to Goffman (1967), any interaction, no matter how mundane, offers a forum for contests. The two examples here show how contests can suddenly arise from the routine business of pedestrian interaction.

None of the parties involved in either of these two contests apologized. By entering a contest, a pedestrian tacitly agrees to forsake the trust that usually mediates encounters in public places. As these two examples show, one of a contest's participants must concede a minor loss of face. In other words, someone must lose the contest. If not, outright conflict may ensue.

I rarely encountered contests in my research. Users of public space habitually act to uphold the bargain and therefore generally attempt to accommodate potentially difficult situations, rather than engage the other parties involved. Challenging

others imperils the trust that one routinely embraces, trust necessary for pedestrian interaction.

## CONCLUSION

As evidenced just by the amount of research it has inspired, pedestrian interaction is extremely complex. At the same time, it is quite orderly; when on foot, we can generally count on getting where we want to go. This order is possible in large part because people behave like competent pedestrians. Behaving like competent pedestrians requires more than just a set of basic motor skills. Most important, people must expect others to act like pedestrians. People in public places can go about their business without concern, Goffman (1971, 250) informs us, because they know others will be doing the same: "most important of all is the individual's acquired understanding of the motives and intent of others around him, this allowing him in many circumstances to treat bystanders as safely disattendable." Many pedestrian encounters proceed smoothly even when they require complicated maneuvering. Most of the time, the trust pedestrians must place in their fellow pedestrians does not become an explicit issue.

Sometimes pedestrian interactions become problematic. In this research, rollerskating led to many problematic encounters, enabling me to examine how pedestrians sustain trust when it becomes threatened. People usually looked uncomfortable in these situations, showing that they rely on safe passages as a matter of course. Troublesome situations thus test the trust that people generally take for granted. When pedestrians apologize, they acknowledge an infraction of trust and reaffirm their commitment to the bargain.

Contests in pedestrian interaction represent one specialized form of trouble. The mere fact that pedestrian encounters occasionally evolve into contests demonstrates just why it is important that pedestrian interactions should generally proceed smoothly. That contests can emerge out of routine encounters



reveals the moral importance that lies just beneath the surface of pedestrian life.

Many scholars (e.g., Goffman 1971; Karp et al. 1977; Lofland 1972a, 1972b) suggest that order in public places relies on the commonly held expectation that pedestrians will play their parts correctly. In this article, I have developed this theory by detailing its collaborative character. Pedestrian interaction is inherently social because it depends on the ritualized production of trust between copresent users of public space. When order is threatened, pedestrians often respond with specific remedial behaviors. The ritualization of remedial measures enables continued order in public places (Goffman 1971). In this respect, pedestrian life is but a microcosm of social order. Active maintenance of a shared reality supports the commonly held perception of its imperviousness (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Mehan and Wood 1975; Pollner 1987); the bargain is strengthened because all pedestrians contribute to its sustenance.

During recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the ostensible disorderliness of America's public spaces. Social scientists have long speculated on the deleterious effects crowded urban spaces have on our psyches (Milgram [1970] 1973; Simmel [1902-1903] 1950), and the contemporary media offer endless stories of street crime. Yet all of this overlooks our day-to-day experiences; the great majority of our interactions with strangers in public places proceed comfortably and smoothly. We implicitly place confidence in scores of strangers every day, and they almost invariably oblige. Certainly, our streets are not devoid of hazards, but in sheer numbers they pale in comparison to the countless acts of trust we each experience every day.

## NOTES

1. Collett and Marsh (1974), Wolff (1973), and Whyte (1988) also propose that pedestrian life relies on cooperation but do not develop this idea to the same extent as do the other students of public life considered here.

2. Hereafter, I refer to the *bargain* as the expectation, tacitly held by all users of public space, that other users of public space will behave like competent pedestrians.

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*NICHOLAS H. WOLFINGER* is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. His interests include social psychology and research methods.