Mary saw him

A pronoun like *him* refers to somebody in (our mental model of) the world.

A pronoun refers to somebody or something that's been part of the conversation, or that you are pointing at.

When you hear a pronoun and want to interpret it, you have to resolve its reference.

John arrived.
Mary saw him.

Here, *him* is likely to refer to John.

Though we could be pointing at Bill, in which case *him* refers to Bill.

The person who hears this has to figure it out.

The person who says this knows who they meant.

And had the grammar that generated the sentence.

Indices

To describe what the speaker intended (that is, which sentence the speaker actually used), we use an **index** on each referent.

1) John, Mary saw him.

2) John, Mary saw him.

The index represents what you are “pointing at” (perhaps just mentally).

Two noun phrases that share an index necessarily share the same reference. They are coreferential.

Seeing him in the mirror

Regard: Ike, Jim, Kristin.

1) There’s Ike, Kristin saw him in the mirror.

2) There’s Jim, Kristin saw him in the mirror.

3) There’s Ike, Jim saw him in the mirror.

4) There’s Jim, “Jim saw him in the mirror.

What’s wrong with that last one?

Seeing himself in the mirror

Right, ok. Jim saw himself in the mirror.

For some reason, when Jim is the subject and *him* is an object, *him* can’t refer to Jim. Furthermore:

1) Jim’s father saw him in the mirror.

2) Jim’s father saw himself in the mirror.

3) Jim’s father said that Mary saw him in the mirror.

4) Mary introduced Jim to him.

5) Mary introduced Jim’s father to him.
**Binding Theory**

**Binding Theory** consists of three Principles that govern the allowed distribution of DPs.

Pronouns: he, her, it, she, ...
Anaphors: himself, herself, itself, ...
R-expressions: Pat, the student, ...

**R-expressions and anaphors**

R-expressions are DPs like Pat, or the professor, or an unlucky farmer, which get their meaning by referring to something in the world. Most DPs are like this.

An anaphor does *not* get its meaning from something in the world—it depends on something else in the sentence.
1) John saw himself in the mirror.
2) Mary bought herself a sandwich.

**Pronouns**

A pronoun is similar to an anaphor in that it doesn’t refer to something in the world but gets its reference from somewhere else.
1) John told Mary that he likes pizza.
2) Mary wondered if she agreed.
   • …but it doesn’t need to be something in the sentence.
3) Mary concluded that he was crazy.

**Constraints on coreference**

1) John, saw himself,
2) *Himself, saw John, *
3) *John,’s mother saw himself.

It is impossible to assign the same referent to John and himself in the (2) and (3). What is different between the good and bad sentences?

**John’s mother**

*John’s mother* is an DP.
1) [John’s mother], saw herself.
2) She saw John.
But it’s a DP that is made up of smaller pieces (John’s and mother).
So what is the internal structure of the DP *John’s mother*?

**[pp John’s mother]**

Remember that pronouns come in three distinguishable forms (in English):

- I, he, she nominative
- Me, him, her accusative
- My, his, her genitive

The genitive case forms seem to have pretty much the same kind of ‘possessive’ meaning that John’s does.
• So, let’s suppose that John’s is the genitive case form of John.
Another point about John's mother is that it seems that the head should be mother. John's sort of modifies mother. Sort of like an adjective does... sort of like an adverb does for a verb...

Let's suppose that John's is just adjoined to the NP mother.

Command domains

What is the difference between the relationship between John and himself in the first case and in the second case?

Tree relations

A node X c-commands its sisters and the nodes dominated by its sisters.

B c-commands C, D, E.
D c-commands E.
E c-commands D.
C c-commands B.
A c-commands nothing.

Binding

A binds B iff
A c-commands B  A is coindexed with B  "if and only if"

Principle A

Principle A of the Binding Theory (preliminary)
An anaphor must be bound.

A is for anaphor? That's good enough for me.
**Principle A**

We now know why these are ungrammatical too:

1) *Himself, saw John, in the mirror.
2) *Herself, likes Mary’s father.
3) *Himself, likes Mary’s father.

There is nothing that c-commands and is coindexed with *himself* and *herself*.

The anaphors are not bound, which violates Principle A.

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**Binding domains**

But this is not the end of the story; consider

1) *John, said that himself, likes pizza.
2) *John, said that Mary called himself,

In these sentences the DP *John* c-commands and is coindexed with (=binds) *himself*, satisfying our preliminary version of Principle A—but the sentences are ungrammatical.

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**Binding domains**

1) *John, saw himself, in the mirror.
2) *John, gave a book to himself.
3) *John, said that himself, is a genius.
4) *John, said that Mary dislikes himself.

What is wrong? *John* binds *himself* in each case. What is different?

In the ungrammatical cases, *himself* is in an embedded clause.

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**Principle A** (revised)

An anaphor must be bound in its binding domain.

**Binding Domain** (preliminary)

The binding domain of an anaphor is the smallest clause containing it.

It seems that not only does an anaphor need to be bound, it needs to be bound nearby (or locally).

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**Pronouns**

1) *John, saw him, in the mirror.
2) *John, said that he, is a genius.
3) *John, said that Mary dislikes him.
4) *John, saw him, in the mirror.

How does the distribution of pronouns differ from the distribution of anaphors?

It looks like it is just the opposite.

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**Principle B**

**Principle B of the Binding Theory**

A pronoun must be free in its binding domain.

**Free**

Not bound

1) *John, saw him.
2) *John,ʼs mother saw him.

B is for bpronoun, thatʼs good enough for me.
Principle C

We now know where pronouns and anaphors are allowed. Consider the following.

- *Stuarti saw him, in the mirror.
- Stuart’s mother saw him in the mirror.
- *Hei saw Stuart, in the mirror.
- His, mother saw Stuart, in the mirror.

What's going wrong with these sentences? The pronouns are unbound as needed for Principle B. What are the binding relations here?

- *Hei likes Johni.
- *She, said that Mary, fears clowns.
- His, mother likes Johni.
- His, mother said that John, fears clowns.

Principle C

Binding is a means of assigning reference.

R-expressions have intrinsic reference; they can’t be assigned their reference from somewhere else.

R-expressions can’t be bound, at all.

Principle C of the Binding Theory

An R-expression must be free.

C is for r-espression, that's... oh, never mind.

Principle A

An anaphor must be bound in its binding domain.

Principle B

A pronoun must be free in its binding domain.

Principle C

An R-expression must be free.

Binding

X binds Y iff X c-commands Y and X and Y are coindexed (a.k.a.: "Y is bound by X").

Free

Not bound

Binding Domain

The binding domain of an anaphor is the smallest clause containing it.

Constraints on interpretation

Binding Theory is about interpretation.

Only a structure that satisfies Binding Theory is interpretable.

If we put together a tree that isn’t interpretable, the process (derivation) is sometimes said to crash.
### Constraints on interpretation

If we succeed in putting together a tree that is interpretable (satisfying the constraints), we say the process (derivation) **converges**.

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### Licensing

NPIs (Negative Polarity Items) are permitted, given “license to appear” by a negative expression. Without a licensor, an NPI is not possible.

1) John didn’t invite Mary/anyone to the party (, did he?)
2) John invited Mary/*anyone to the party (, didn’t he?)
3) Nobody invited Mary/anyone to the party (, did they?)

NPIs are licensed by negation in a sentence.

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### Negative Polarity Items

But it isn’t quite as simple as that. Consider:

1) I didn’t see anyone.
2) *I saw anyone.
3) *Anyone didn’t see me.
4) *Anyone saw me.

It seems that simply having negation in the sentence isn’t by itself enough to license the use of an NPI. Negation has to precede the NPI?

5) *The picture of nobody pleased anyone.

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### Pondering some apparent early disobedience

Young kids (5-6 years) seem to accept sentences like (1) as meaning what (2) means for adults.

1) Mama Bear is pointing to her.
2) Mama Bear is pointing to herself.

Suppose that, contrary to appearances, kids do know and obey Principle B. Look carefully at the definitions of Binding Theory. If Principle B isn’t the problem, what do you think kids are getting wrong to allow (1) to have the meaning of (2)?

- Think in particular about how you decide which index to assign to her. What is the implication of having the same index? What is the implication of having different indices?