

THE DELANEY DOSSIER: GOFFMAN MATERIALS

1973: re: Frame Analysis manuscript

1. May 3, 1973 letter of thanks from EG to MD on my critique of the draft manuscript of *Frame Analysis*.
2. April 13, 1973 letter from MD to EG, meta-commenting on my critical commentary on *Frame Analysis*. In retrospect, I am not at all sure how penetrating (or even entirely understandable) these comments are, although I do think that EG may have toned down some of his more hard-edged positivistic proclamations in the final book as a result. I had urged him to adopt a more “perspectivist” account of frame analysis, in part because I considered his patchwork attempts at philosophically grounding the whole endeavor to be wanting, and for that reason all the more susceptible to critical attack. (It was, after all, a rather strange hybrid in being an empiricist-ethnographic approach to a number of “reality” issues commonly treated in philosophical theory.) In the completed book, EG addressed my suggestion in footnote 4 on page 26, where he argues (with considerable justification) that his version of a correspondence theory of cognitive validity ought not evade warranting its own claims to be a realistic depiction of reality (or at least the bulk of truth-claims put forth on the basis of everyday practical reason).

1974:

Acknowledgments page from *Frame Analysis*, citing MD’s contributions, with a photocopy of a presentation card (“Compliments of the Author”) sent directly to me in New Haven by the publisher, Harper & Row, along with a copy (unsigned) of the book.

Aside: I had already bought a copy of the newly-published *FA* from the Yale bookstore and had marked up some passages, making it unreturnable. Being short of money (as usual) at the time, I decided to swap copies and “return” the unmarked presentation copy in lieu of the purchased copy. As I later informed EG, this entailed using a bit of “framing” chicanery — namely, explaining away the lack of a Yale bookstore sticker — to dissemble the fact that I had not bought that particular copy of the book at the bookstore. (I think that EG was more often chagrined than not by his readers and students resorting to such ostensibly “Goffmanesque” stratagems, in effect taking his name in vain. By many accounts, however, he himself was not above resorting to such gambits as an interactional gamester adept at getting a “rise” out of his interlocutors. Besides, his many sly accounts of confidence games, hoaxes, forgeries, espionage exploits, criminal subterfuge, and the like gave some warrant for seeing a bit of a sharpster in his character. Not to mention his one-time stint as a card-counter in Vegas.)

Goffman

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May 3, 1973


Mr. Michael Delaney
Department of Sociology
University of Pennsylvania

Dear Mike:

I have just begun to work through your comments systematically and will finish doing this as soon as I get back to town on the 11th. May I say now, however, that I am much in awe of the work you have put in, and much in your debt for having done so. I don't know how far I can get in answering your larger complaints, but at least a wide range of the smaller ones will be dealt with.

I'll get in touch with you when I have finished. Again thanks; often those points which you are most doubtful about raising are ones most useful for me to hear about.

Sincerely,



Erving Goffman

EG/LAC

4207 Chester Ave., Apt. 402
Philadelphia, Pa. 19104
April 13, 1973

Dear Erving Goffman,

The dirty deed is done. Herewith you will find your lovingly stroked words mutilated with bloody red ink and other unkind cuts. You have honored me by inviting my comments. In return, naturally, I have betrayed you. You have asked my sensibility to react, and it has, not holding back either ideas or criticisms, letting things spurt where they may. It might help to record that in these Macbethian labors I have generally not tarried to lavish praises. The pages are cluttered enough without an ongoing stream of enthusiams. Now, it would not do in such an effort not to make comment on my commentary. So let me get on with it.

1. As suggested, the commentary is cloddish, nit-picky, hypercritical and not always ready to take a joke. Prickish. And I'm sorry. But the orientation is to frame, not game playing.

Suggested synonyms or re-formulations are there not so much for substitution as for possible tightening-up, precision, clarification. I have little to say about structure. As I read along, I responded immediately to the text---not always happily (moods, free-associations, wild hairs...) By and large I did not try to pile up simply more riveting examples, assuming that the problem is critical selection rather than underabundance. I could have, but footnote mongering is not my intention. Besides you will have quite enough of me as it is.

Sometimes you may complain that I have over-complexified where things must needs be kept simple. That is true. Sometimes, however, you over-simplify just where you have to most careful.

If there is an overall thrust to my remarks, it concerns the logical scaffolding on which you build your case. Herein, it has been found wanting. (I should add: I am not as learned as I display I am.)

2. On style: It could be that some of your "op. cit.s" are too spread out for easily reference. Mightn't you use tag titles (for your own self-quotations as well)? Would it help to have a lexicon of the major terms? Surely a table of contents and index would be useful. We are all subject in this day and age to trying to be too "relevant", to comment on the passing scene. Unfortunately such contemporariety by the time it reaches print may seem out of whack, or what is worse, a bore. (As H.L. Mencken.) I would eschew.

There are a variety of levels of concerns, data sources and seriousness apparent, some of which jar each other. (Naturally we would clash most on what we choose to ironize about.) Occasionally generalizations and specimen examples seem not to match up.

Note, you will note I have noted some notable notations. Of course.

