

Book Reviews

Forms of Talk. By Erving Goffman. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981. Pp. vi + 335. \$20.00 (cloth); \$7.95 (paper).

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Erving Goffman appears to have two focuses in *Forms of Talk*. The first is in reaction to the kind of theorizing in sociolinguistics that attempts to capture the complexity of discourse by the use of highly formalized models. Goffman does not reject formalistic analyses but argues that they should be part of an approach that places talk in a broader interactional framework. A second and related focus is one that recurs in all Goffman's work; that is the demonstration that social interaction constantly involves self-presentation and maintenance. Goffman instructs the student of discourse to look beyond the idealized model of the speaker/hearer as a transmitter of information to the framing devices and strategies through which self is displayed, maintained, validated, or denied.

Toward these ends, Goffman skillfully exhibits the interplay of ritualization, participant framework, and "embedding" in face-to-face communication. In "Replies and Responses," the first of the five essays in this book, Goffman adds to what he calls the "system constraints" of the conversational analysts (e.g., the Sacks-Schegloff-Jefferson "turn-taking procedures") by introducing "ritual constraints." Ritual constraints govern how each individual should handle himself so as not to discredit his own or another's tacit claims to good character. A second important contribution in "Replies and Responses" is Goffman's discussion of discourse units and sequencing. Here his notion of embedding is most relevant. In general terms, embedding is part of our "linguistic ability to speak of events at any remove in time and space from the situated present" (p. 3). Because of this embedding ability, social actors have wide dramatic liberties. We can mimic, mime, reenact, and hide ourselves away from what we have said, are saying, or are about to say. Given this emphasis, Goffman offers a basic interactional unit composed of three moves: mentionable event, mention, and comment on mention. But Goffman does not mean to imply that discourse is simply a matter of chaining a series of interactional moves together. In fact, he argues that responses must have "references" and that "our basic model of talk perhaps ought not to be dialogic couplets and their chaining, but rather a sequence of response moves with each in the series carving out its own reference" (p. 52).

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In "Response Cries" Goffman displays his fascinating talent for taking subtle, taken-for-granted features of everyday interaction and showing that these phenomena may not be what they seem to be and that they are much more important than we assume. Response cries are exclamatory interjections (e.g., "Oops!" "Whoops!" etc.) which, along with other types of self-talk and deprecations, are commonly seen as being purely expressive blurtings that often occur at times of stress. Goffman challenges this view and suggests that we "look to the light these ventings provide, not to the heat they dispel" (p. 120). For Goffman, these vocalizations "make a claim upon the attention of everyone in the social situation, a claim that our inner concerns should be theirs, too, but unlike the claim made by talk, ours here is only for a limited period of time" (p. 121). For example, consider response cries that serve as transition displays. These are uttered upon entering or leaving a state of marked discomfort: "Brr!" is the usual exclamation on leaving outside cold for inside warmth and "Ahh!" or "Phew!" the one used when entering a cool place from a hot one. Goffman's point is that these expressions are conventionalized as to form, occasion, and social function and experienced so commonly that they should be studied for what they tell us about social order in everyday life. But Goffman wishes to go a step further. He argues that ritualized versions of these expressions can themselves be embedded in standard conversational encounters. For example, "When a speaker finds he has skated rather close to the edge of discretion or tact, he may give belated recognition to where his words have gone, making a halt by uttering a plaintive *Oops!*, meant to evoke the image of someone who has need of this particular cry, the whole enactment having an unserious, openly theatrical character" (p. 117). In appreciating that these ritualized response cries become part of conversation, one will discover that they cannot be analyzed without references to their original functions outside conversation. Having taken the argument to this point, Goffman ends the essay by recommending "that linguists have reason to broaden their net, reason to bring in uttering that is not talking, reason to deal with social situations, not merely with jointly sustained talk" (p. 122).

For Goffman, a change in "footing" in discourse (the topic of the third essay) "implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (p. 128). The notion of changes in footing is offered as an alternative to the traditional categories of speaker and hearer. For Goffman, the notion of hearer is too global because it refers to a wide and undifferentiated range of participants. Therefore, Goffman introduces the notions of "participation status" (i.e., one's position regarding particular utterances) and "participation framework" (i.e., one's position regarding all other persons present during discourse). When discussing the term "speaker," Goffman argues that a more useful concept would be "production format." This notion refers to the multiple ways speakers can present themselves (e.g., as animators, authors, principals, or some com-

bination thereof). In "Footing," as in other essays in the book, Goffman ends by demonstrating that the topic at hand is even more complex than he has led us to believe. For changes in footing should not be seen as merely switching from one stance to another. Rather, because of embedding and ritualization, when we change footing "we are not so much terminating the prior alignment as holding it in abeyance with the understanding that it will almost immediately be reengaged" (p. 155). Therefore, one can hold the same footing across several turns at talk, and one alignment can be fully enclosed within another. "In truth, in talk it seems routine that, while firmly standing on two feet, we jump up and down on another" (p. 155).

In the last two essays Goffman applies many of the concepts he introduced in the first three papers. In "The Lecture," he analyzes this form of talk as a speech event and focuses specifically on the comparison of changes in footing in lectures with those of talk in other social contexts. Even though I have given and attended numerous lectures, I had trouble following his argument in this essay. Goffman does make several interesting points, but it is possible that this paper was more successful in its original presentation as a lecture than it is in print.

"Radio Talk" is an insightful and entertaining essay. Goffman begins by describing the special conditions of radio announcing that make speech errors or "fautes" highly noticeable and in need of self-correction. He then goes on to provide numerous examples of various types of fautes and announcers' strategies for dealing with them. An important feature of error correction in radio talk is that in attending to a faute the announcer directs more attention to it and may make things worse:

Newscaster: "This is your eleven o'clock newscaster bringing you on the spot report . . . I mean on the spot report . . . I mean on the tot resort . . . Oh, well let's just skip it!" [P. 310]

Goffman's main point, however, is not just to provide us with amusing examples. He argues that an examination of radio talk can direct our attention to critical features of everyday informal talk that might easily go unnoticed. Informal talk, unlike radio talk, is highly flexible and allows speakers a considerable margin of error. In informal talk the speaker can from moment to moment during discourse "meet whatever occurs by sustaining or changing footing." And most important, he can select "that footing which provides him the least self-threatening position" (p. 325).

In sum, *Forms of Talk* is an interesting and insightful book. I recommend it highly to all of those who are interested in the relationship between language and social life and even more to those sociologists who are familiar with Goffman's dramaturgical approach but unaware of his recent important contributions to sociolinguistic theory.

The View from Goffman. Edited by Jason Ditton. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980. Pp. 289. \$25.00.

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Erving Goffman was one of the few individuals in contemporary sociology who have been genuinely innovative theoretical thinkers and who have, at the same time, had an intellectual impact outside their own discipline, or even outside the academic community. Yet there have been varied views as to the real nature of his theoretical stance and the worth of his contribution. Was Goffman a symbolic interactionist or a structuralist? Was he a pop sociologist with the footnotes left in, or a mid-century Simmel? From what class perspective did he really look at society? And so forth.

In *The View from Goffman* 11 scholars have undertaken a searching analysis of Goffman's work. Six are Americans, five (including the editor) British—evidence of a growing interest in Goffman in Great Britain since the 1960s. While all the Americans have published work on Goffman before, most of the British have not.

On the whole, the contributors are appreciative but not uncritical of Goffman's work. Gouldner's discussion of Goffman in *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* is the point of departure for two who take positions opposing Gouldner's. Mary Rogers insists that Goffman had more to say on issues of power and inequality than he has been given credit for, while George Gonos proposes that the underlying class position of Goffman's social theory is not that of Gouldner's "new middle class." Gonos notes that Goffman's early writings come out of the same postwar period as those works of Mills, Riesman, and Whyte that are concerned with this expanding class. Goffman's own work, he suggests, takes the position of the lumpen-bourgeoisie, the remaining independent small entrepreneurs, who struggle to find their way through (or around) this new class structure. This class perspective has much in common with that of the lumpen-proletariat that is often the immediate source of Goffman's ethnography.

Gonos also describes Goffman as "an American structuralist." The reaction against the routine assumption that he represented only a somewhat odd variety of symbolic interactionism is recurrent in several of the contributions to this volume. Clearly Goffman's thought must be viewed against a wider background than that of homegrown American sociology. In analyzing Goffman's early writings, John Lofland emphasizes the strand of existentialism, while Randall Collins traces an intellectual network of considerable range. He notes the symbolic interactionism of Goffman's Chicago years but also the presence in Chicago of Durkheimian, social anthropological influences mediated by Lloyd Warner—influences which had already been present in Goffman's earlier academic milieu in Canada. Collins also mentions the ties to Simmel and Kenneth Burke, pays at-

tention to the connections with game theory (Herbert Simon and Thomas Schelling) of *Strategic Interaction*, and the influence of the ethnomethodologists and linguistic philosophers on *Frame Analysis*. Collins's conclusion is that Goffman consistently kept in close touch both with the frontiers of academic social thought and with evolving popular culture, perhaps using each to establish his role distance from the other.

The question of whether Goffman is really a structuralist has been raised mostly since the publication of *Frame Analysis*. Here Gonos brings it up again, pointing to an emphasis on rules underlying interaction. Steve Crook and Laurie Taylor, in their contribution, are critical of an earlier Gonos publication with this view, however, and consider Goffman systematically ambiguous on this point, with both interactionist and structuralist tendencies included in his "frame" concept. Peter Manning also touches on this controversy in his elegant concluding essay on Goffman's style and ends by taking a kind of structuralist view.

In other contributions, George Psathas examines *Strategic Interaction* closely and states his own phenomenological alternative; Mike Hepworth shows the usefulness of Goffman's thought in studies of deviance and control but does not attempt to develop it much further; and Robin Williams examines Goffman's conceptualization of conversational interaction, noting its emphasis on accommodation.

While this volume provides a good overview of Goffman's work and responses to it, his writings are not covered evenly. Not surprisingly, *The Presentation of Self* and *Frame Analysis* get the most attention. There is also some inevitable overlap with previous commentary, although contributors on the whole make little direct reference to writings preceding theirs (apart from drawing on some of their own earlier publications).

For a reader who wants to trace Goffman's writings as well as earlier comment on them, Jason Ditton's editorial conscientiousness makes this a particularly useful volume. His introductory "bibliographic exegesis" lists all Goffman's available writings, beginning with the unpublished M.A. thesis of 1949 and continuing up to 1979. It also includes reviews and other published commentary, although in this respect it does not claim to be complete. With one exception (Boltanski), it covers English-language work only. Not included is what is probably the first book on Goffman, published in Danish in 1975 and edited by Gregersen. More surprisingly, Bennett Berger's 1973 *Encounter* piece is also omitted. Because contributors to the volume cite different American and British editions of Goffman's books, the editor has adopted a rather cumbersome procedure for collating references. It would have been simpler to refer to only one set of editions, but possibly this would have displeased either American or British readers.

A book like this does much to illuminate the uses, realized or potential, of Goffman's work and intellectual perspective. Goffman himself was reluctant to respond to his commentators, critics, and admirers, except perhaps obliquely through his further works. So perhaps we will go on, unconstrained by what Goffman may have thought right or wrong inter-

pretations, to find rather different kinds of new problems and inspirations in his writings. One might feel, for example, that more could be said about their relevance for comparative, macrosociological, and historical studies. One anthropologist has taken the perspective of impression management into a study of a Brazilian Indian village. Is it as much at home there as in Chicago? Someone has suggested that Pierre Bourdieu is "a French Goffman"—what is there to such a comparison? The civilizational studies of Norbert Elias deal, on a much larger scale in time and space, with ideas that appear related to Goffman's. Would it be useful to look in greater detail at how their works speak to each other? If *The View from Goffman* crosses some boundaries in starting an Atlantic dialog, its topics might not yet be exhausted.

Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond. By Albert O. Hirschman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. viii + 310. \$29.50 (cloth); \$12.95 (paper).

Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action. By Albert O. Hirschman. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982. Pp. x + 138. \$14.50 (cloth); \$4.95 (paper).

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At the beginning of a recent essay on economic development, Albert Hirschman agrees with Kuhn's contrast between the natural and the social sciences. According to Kuhn, normal natural science—the settled verification, application, and extension of widely accepted paradigms—is interrupted only infrequently by the turmoil of paradigm change. But any would-be paradigm in the social sciences is likely to elicit a barrage of criticism so compelling that nothing gets settled. Luckily for Hirschman, Kuhn is right, for in "normal science" there is no room for Hirschman's craft. He cannot be confined by any paradigm, or looser school of thought, or even by his home discipline, economics. Broad categories—economic development, political conflict, human motivation, the history of ideas—may capture much of his work, but they do not convey its distinctive quality. Hirschman exploits the anarchy of the social sciences, traversing paradigms, disciplines, nations, and centuries to discover congruities and complements among previously isolated achievements.

The title *Essays in Trespassing* acknowledges the author's refusal to stay at home. The 14 essays are divided into five groups, each corresponding to one of his earlier books. But it is the introductory essay, set apart from the others, that offers the best clues to the coherence of his