

A SIMMELIAN READING OF GOFFMAN

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## WRITER'S NOTES

- (1) In accordance with University Regulations, I am obliged to specify the incorporation of my published works in this thesis. Part of Smith (1980) appears in Chapter 3; a version of Chapter 4 is published as Smith (1989a); Chapters 5 and 6 draw upon Smith (1988). In addition, a version of Appendix F is to appear as Smith (1989b). Part of the Bibliography is extracted from Smith and Waksler (1989).
- (2) Where 'he' is used in the text as the impersonal pronoun, 'she' is also expressly intended. Expediency has determined this practice. Although Simmel and Goffman acknowledge the deficiencies of the expression, they both use the male impersonal pronoun in its universal form. It therefore makes for economy of exposition to follow their questionable practice.

## ABSTRACT

The sociologies of Georg Simmel (1858-1918) and Erving Goffman (1922-1982) are compared and contrasted in order to present a Simmelian interpretation of Goffman. It is proposed that this is one appropriate way of lending coherence to Goffman's work and dealing with some of its interpretive difficulties. The first two chapters trace the development of the work of Simmel and Goffman and address the issue of its systematicity. Chapter three considers certain substantive affinities and correspondences. The formal method employed by Simmel and Goffman is discussed in chapter four. Methodological questions are also pursued in chapter five which reviews aspects of Simmel's and Goffman's rhetoric. Chapter six compares their views on the nature of the individual. A case study applying their analytical apparatuses to aspects of game show humour is appended. Throughout, the aim is to demonstrate the relevance of one of sociology's major classical thinkers for an understanding of a leading contemporary.

## INTRODUCTION

### 0.1 Rationale

In The Making of Symbolic Interactionism Paul Rock observes that 'Erving Goffman may become the unacknowledged reincarnation of Georg Simmel' (1979: 27). This thesis attempts to set out some grounds for a more explicit acknowledgement of the atavism. Features of both Simmel's and Goffman's work conspire to obscure their relationship and thus produce the possibility of 'unacknowledged reincarnation'. As Rock notes, the interactionist tradition in which Goffman is standardly located is one that is chronically forgetful of its past and thus not always wholly articulate in justifying its current concerns. A further reason why the relation of Goffman's work to Simmel is not plainly apparent can be found in the famous entry Simmel made in his diary shortly before his death. There he likened his intellectual influence to a cash legacy which would be so transformed by its beneficiaries that it would no longer reveal its origins (Levine, 1971:xviii). If Simmel can be assumed to have been correct in his assessment of his future impact, then the absence of a simple correspondence between their respective sociological contributions is more easily understood. Goffman encashed his Simmelian heritage in respect of a set of intellectual problems that were quite distinct from those which animated Simmel's original enterprise. Indeed, Everett Hughes has observed, 'like Freud, Simmel has had many intellectual children. Not all of them have that wisdom which makes them know

their own father' (1955:9). To which must be added: the aim of this thesis is not to pursue a paternity suit nor to query Goffman's wisdom, but to explore the points of contact between their respective sociologies in order to consider some implications of viewing Goffman through Simmelian spectacles.

It is hoped to show that, despite some substantial differences between their sociological contributions, there are nonetheless similarities that are neither superficial nor fortuitous. There is some intrinsic value in examining Goffman's work alongside that of Simmel. On its own, however, such an aim risks the charge of scholasticism. At least three further justifications for the comparison can be suggested. First of all, the demonstration of antecedents of Goffman's sociology in the work of Simmel should serve to temper some of the more exaggerated claims about Goffman's 'brilliance', 'creativity' and 'originality', claims which tend to overestimate the uniqueness of Goffman's enterprise. Goffman's creation was indeed a highly distinctive sociology but it is salutary to note that it had precursors in the classical tradition. Secondly, to the extent to which affinities between the two sociologies are evident it can be expected that a similar order of problems are encountered in the development of each project and that both will be subjected to similar kinds of criticism. Thus attention to the 'Simmel in Goffman' can cast some light on the reception given to Goffman's sociology in the discipline at large. Thirdly, Simmel's sociological work can be drawn on as an interpretive device which sets an appropriate agenda for 'decoding' Goffman.

Many readers express some puzzlement when confronted with Goffman's writings. Goffman certainly offers one of the more accessible and readable contributions to the modern discipline of sociology, but the immediate and larger point of it all is not always easy for readers to grasp. The interpretation of Goffman's work is not a simple task. There is a notorious ambiguity inherent in interpreting Goffman's work which stems in part from Goffman's own reticence about methodological and metatheoretical questions. It has been argued that attempts to uncover a latent theoretical orientation in Goffman's sociology, that is seeing it as fundamentally symbolic interactionist or structuralist or existentialist, are seriously mistaken for they wrongly assume that a 'single objective meaning' (Ashworth 1985: 106) can be assigned to a text. If the 'realist mirage' (ibid) is to be avoided it must be recognised that there is no single and exclusive interpretation of Goffman's sociology. The argument of this thesis is that, in the absence of any interpretive null point, reading Goffman through Simmelian spectacles is one appropriate way of lending coherence to that work. An awareness of the realist mirage also suggests that an author's own comments about his work, whilst of undoubted interest, have no privileged standing. Goffman apparently concurred with this view, which is fortunate given the paucity of direct references to Simmel in his writings.

Perhaps the nearest Goffman comes to acknowledging intellectual indebtedness to Simmel occurs in the 'Preface' to



Presentation of Self when he discusses the 'mixed status' of his illustrative material:

'The justification for this approach (as I take to be the justification for Simmel's also) is that the illustrations together fit into a coherent framework that ties together bits of experience the reader has already had and provides the student with a guide worth testing in case studies of institutional social life.'  
(1959:xii)

Another clue is provided by the frontispiece to Goffman's doctoral dissertation (1953:iv) which consists of a long excerpt from Simmel about the 'immeasurable number of less conspicuous forms of relationship and kinds of interaction ... (which) incessantly tie men together.' (1950:9-10). Elsewhere in Goffman's writings there is scant reference to Simmel, although the title of his last book, Forms of Talk, nods in that direction. As has been noted, Goffman cared little about acknowledging intellectual debts or outlining the character of his distinctive approach to sociology, so it is hardly surprising that the connection with Simmel receives but cursory and oblique reference in his writings. Simmel did not show quite so cavalier an attitude towards fundamental theoretical and methodological problems perhaps because, as one of sociology's founding fathers, he was compelled to justify the new specialism in the face of doubting critics. The first chapter of his Sociology discussed these questions in the papers translated as 'The problem of sociology' (1909) and 'How is society possible?' (1910). These issues are tackled by Goffman, but with varying degrees of seriousness in sketchy remarks scattered across his prefaces,

introductions and footnotes, and in a way not comparable with the rather more earnest attention Simmel gave these difficult problems. Only in Goffman's last works (1981a, 1983) do they receive anything resembling sustained treatment. Simmel by contrast was well aware that if his formal sociology did not conform to existing models of science, 'then clearly the determination of its place within the system of the sciences, the discussion of its methods and potential fertilities, is a new task in itself, which requires its solution not in a preface, but as the first part of the investigation.' (Simmel, in Wolff 1950:xxvi).

It is not difficult to see how Goffman came by Simmel's sociology. Simmel's work, unlike that of his now more prominent friend and contemporary Max Weber, was translated into English in his own lifetime. At the University of Chicago Albion Small saw to it that Simmel's work reached a wide English-speaking audience through the publication of many of his sociological papers in the American Journal of Sociology between 1895-1910. In the post-war period at Chicago Simmel's work was primarily disseminated by Robert E Park and Ernest W Burgess. Park, probably the single most influential member of the 'Chicago School' later confessed that 'listening to the lectures of Georg Simmel, at Berlin, I received my only formal (sic) instruction in Sociology' (Park, 1950:vi). The famous textbook by Park and Burgess, Introduction to the Science of Sociology (1969; orig.1921) gave considerable attention to formal sociology by including no fewer than ten extracts from Simmel - more than from any other single author.

Although this book reflected the catholic tastes of Park and Burgess, its framework was of a broadly formal character, and as Martindale has observed, 'when all is said and done, their hearts belonged to Simmel, for the central ideas of their sociological system were composed of processes, formally conceived.' (1961:254; see also Matthews 1977:31, 41-50). The ethnographic tradition begun at Chicago by Park and Burgess was carried forward by Everett C Hughes (Becker et al, 1968), whose work on the sociology of occupations powerfully influenced that eminent cohort of graduate students who trained at Chicago in the decade immediately following the end of the Second World War (Mullins, 1973). It is noteworthy that the translation of Simmel was one of Hughes' scholarly interests, and that he was instrumental in advancing the understanding of Simmel's sociology (Simmel, 1949; Hughes, 1965; Goffman, 1971:126n3; Levine, 1971:vii). The larger question of Simmel's influence on American sociology is not at issue here (Levine et al, 1976), but what does need to be emphasised is that Simmel's sociology constituted a significant element of the intellectual milieu at the University of Chicago during Goffman's apprenticeship there between 1945 and 1954.

It will be argued that much can be learned about Goffman's sociology by likening it to Simmel's, but the limits of this comparison must be borne firmly in mind. The most obvious difference lies in the range of their work. Simmel's sociology is grounded in his neoKantian philosophical outlook and it comprised only one portion of his intellectual production as a whole, which ranged over ethics, metaphysics, arts, religion,

logic and social psychology. He wrote on a great diversity of subjects: on artists such as Rembrandt, Goethe, Michelangelo, Rodin, Stefan George; on places of interest such as Florence, Rome, Venice, the Alps; on sociological topics such as money, adventure, coquetry and shame; on philosophers, including Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche; and on matters which defy easy categorisation, such as landscapes, the handle and the ruin. His was a truly eclectic mind. Moreover, Simmel was primarily a philosopher for whom sociology was a major interest for only a portion of his life, whilst Goffman was a lifelong sociologist. Inevitably Goffman's narrow concentration on face-to-face interaction and its immediately adjacent fields appears incredibly blinkered in comparison to the range of Simmel's work - a range which rightly or wrongly earned him a reputation for intellectual dilettantism. Not that Goffman comes out of the comparison unfavourably. To judge from Goffman's footnotes and asides he was an immensely well-read sociologist. His work shows an extraordinary breadth of knowledge brought to bear upon a quite narrow field and a specific range of problems pertaining to the dynamics of encounters. It would be fairer to say that the difference between Simmel's and Goffman's intellectual production represents the quite different ways in which their intellectual energies have been harnessed.

The formal method pioneered by Simmel will be examined in some detail later in the thesis, but its essence can be simply stated. Amidst the historical and cultural variability of the contents of social life, formal sociology abstracts the

structuring principles which provide the order within the flux. Analytically, the forms can be isolated from the actual, real contents of social life. Simmel hoped to create a grammar of the forms of sociation. Thus formal sociology 'proceeds like grammar, which isolates the pure forms of language from their contents through which these forms, nevertheless, come to life' (Simmel, 1950:22). Formal sociology is primarily concerned with the identification and classification of different forms of sociation and analysis of their properties and subtypes. For Simmel, 'formal' or 'pure' sociology rests upon the abstraction of 'the mere element of sociation'; examples of forms of sociation so derived include competition, superiority and subordination, division of labour, conflict and representation, which may all, as he points out, be found in a religious community, a band of conspirators, an economic association, an art school and a family. The converse case also holds: identical contents may be found in a variety of different forms of sociation. Sexual contents are expressed in a great variety of family forms (monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, and so on). The compelling feature of formal sociology is that it brings together situations and relationships which while found in different parts of the social world and perhaps even known to participants under other terms, nevertheless share identical formal properties (Garfinkel, 1956:190). By subsuming some part of social activity under a formal concept its underlying 'function' or 'outcome' becomes clear.

Considered as a formal sociologist Goffman may be seen as engaged in elucidating and analysing a great variety of hitherto unnoticed 'forms of sociation': the basic kinds of face work; deference and demeanour; embarrassment; the forms of alienation from interaction; performances, teams, discrepant roles, role distance and so on. To appreciate the extent of the formal impulse in Simmel's and Goffman's sociology and the methodological implications that arise, a more detailed examination of the formal approach is required. That task is undertaken in chapter 4.

In the English-speaking world Simmel has long been acknowledged as the founder of formal sociology and it is this aspect of his sociology which will receive most attention. However, over the past fifteen years there has been a renaissance of interest in Simmel and his sociology has been the subject of reassessment in the USA and Britain. The publication of a number of works previously only available in German has helped English-speaking readers to place Simmel's sociology in the broader context of his thinking on philosophy, culture and social issues. Critical interest in Simmel has also grown. The work of David Frisby (eq 1981; 1984a; 1985) is of particular importance. Drawing on recent German scholarship as well as a detailed reconstruction of Simmel's reception by his contemporaries, Frisby has challenged the older formalist interpretation of Simmel and has argued that his major significance is as a sociologist of modernity, of the 'modes of experiencing that which is "new" in "modern" society' (1985:1). Frisby (1981,

1985) proposes that the aestheticisation of social reality which is a pervasive feature of Simmel's analyses represents a unique 'sociological impressionism'. As will be evident from the following pages, this thesis owes much to Frisby's careful and insightful discussions of Simmel's sociology. However, somewhat in contrast to Frisby, I see no necessary incompatibility between the older and now standard formalist interpretation and Frisby's new emphasis on the dimensions of modernity and impressionism. Moreover, it was the older interpretation of Simmel that Goffman came to know. Frisby's work brings to light some neglected aspects of Simmel's sociology and enables it to be placed in the context of his thinking as a whole; in so doing it has considerably aided the present project.

## 0.2 Organisation

The thesis comprises six chapters and seven appendices, one of which (Appendix F) is a short case study applying some of the ideas of Simmel and Goffman. The first two chapters of the thesis trace the development of the work of Simmel and Goffman respectively with an eye to locating the bases of the unity and systematicity of their sociologies. These chapters are primarily exegetical and are designed to be informative about the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman: particular attention is paid to the less well-known aspects of their work. As such they lay a foundation for the subsequent, more argumentative chapters. Moreover, in view of the aim of this thesis to present a Simmelian reading of Goffman, it is necessary to establish a

broad view of the nature of their respective sociological enterprises. To some extent the writings of all significant thinkers have to be reconstructed by their readers. The need to reconstruct the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman is made all the more urgent by the relatively minimal programmatic guidance they provide as well as by the widely acknowledged interpretive difficulties arising out of the fragmentary and essayistic character of their writings. The first two chapters thus attempt an account of their work as a whole. The first chapter on Simmel adopts an historical approach. Since Simmel was constantly developing and re\_fining his ideas in his publications, this approach appears best-suited to the task. The chapter on Goffman employs a different approach. Whilst there are continuities between his various books and papers, each has a more discrete and self-contained character than Simmel's writings. Also, the basic assumptions of Goffman's approach remain relatively stable over the thirty years of his intellectual productivity. These considerations, along with the fact that his work is relatively familiar to modern sociological readers, suggested that a more systematic exposition, designed to describe the leading dimensions of his sociology, might be more helpful.

The first two chapters are thus primarily exegetical. They are long and contain many quotations and I would like to apologise to the reader who finds them tedious reading. However they are necessary for the proper execution of the thesis. It is no part of the present project to fix Goffman on to a Procrustean bed of Simmelian assumptions about sociology and social life.



Rather, Simmel's work is drawn upon as an agenda or frame for making intelligible and lending coherence to Goffman's work. Fairly extensive exegetical work is thus necessary if distorted and one-sided interpretations are to be avoided. The first two chapters also attempt to lay bare the bases of the unity or systematicity of the two sociologies. A common complaint addressed to both Simmel and Goffman is that their work is fragmentary and lacks adequate conceptual integration. Thus Kurt Wolff suggests that 'Simmel often appears as though in the midst of writing he were overwhelmed by an idea, by an avalanche of ideas, and as if he incorporated them without interrupting himself, digesting and assimilating only to the extent granted him by the onrush' (1950:xix). In a closely similar vein Anthony Giddens observes, 'Goffman is thought to be someone overtaken by the tumble of his own ideas, which scatter in all directions and resist any kind of overall consolidation' (1988:252). A subsidiary theme of the first two chapters is thus an inquiry into the senses in which we can speak of 'Simmel's sociology' or 'Goffman's sociology' as comprising a meaningful whole.

The remaining four chapters present some bases for a Simmelian reading of Goffman. In chapter 3 a comparison of selected portions of their work is undertaken in order to establish the nature and extent of the substantive affinities between Simmel and Goffman. The aim of chapter 3 is to examine the extent to which Goffman's analyses develop themes already present in Simmel. The analytical and methodological dimensions of formal sociology are addressed in chapter 4 and it is argued

that useful guidance about the broad aims of Goffman's methodology is provided by Simmel. However, there are also important respects in which Goffman advances the formal method beyond Simmel. This chapter examines the status of formal sociology in the conventional terms set by sociological theory and the philosophy of the social sciences. A somewhat contrasting approach to these same analytical and methodological issues is taken in chapter 5 which examines the rhetorical aspects of their analyses, that is, the strategies of communication and persuasion their writings employ. Chapter 6 compares Simmel's and Goffman's thinking on a central concern to both, the individual. Appendix F demonstrates how selected themes of Simmel's analysis of flirtation can be empirically addressed by the employment of Goffman's frame analytical apparatus and points to some of the limits of the latter's conceptual frameworks.

This thesis is thus an exercise which aims to demonstrate the relevance of one of sociology's major classical thinkers for an understanding of a leading contemporary. The notion of 'influence' is a difficult one, but a basic contention of this thesis is that Simmel's project is one substantial source of influence on Goffman's. In pointing to affinities between their works there is undoubtedly a risk of spurious attributions and a slide towards the 'realist mirage'. This thesis is not an empirical sociology of knowledge but a theoretical comparison which is based on a relatively long-range intellectual genealogy and as such focusses firmly on convergences and divergences, not attributions. It argues that through this comparison aspects of

the nature and scope of the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman can be clarified.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIMMEL'S SOCIOLOGY

#### 1.1 Introduction

The manner of exposition of this chapter and the next - essentially a summary of the leading ideas of Simmel's and Goffman's sociology - may seem pedestrian and even somewhat clumsy. The justification for proceeding in this way is twofold. First of all, if there is a systematic basis to each of these sociologies, then it can best be uncovered by attempting to develop an immanent understanding of the work of Simmel and Goffman, and this necessarily requires detailed and specific attention to the works themselves and their contexts in order for their aims to be appreciated in their own terms. Secondly, it must be acknowledged that an endeavour such as this which attempts a particular reading of Goffman runs the risk of distorting the writings by filtering ideas out of their original contexts in order to secure the preferred reading. Thus, the first two chapters are designed to serve as a check upon the understandable tendency, given the aim of this thesis, to force a Simmelian interpretation of Goffman.

Any genuine understanding of the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman requires that they are seen, first and foremost, in their own terms; which is to say that proper attention must be given to the contexts, objectives, issues and other relevances which these authors identified as pertinent to each enterprise. In the case

of Simmel, the present writer's lack of facility in the German language places a constraint on this aim, for not all of Simmel's sociologically important work has been translated into English, and thus on occasion recourse to secondary sources is sought. However, there is certainly a sufficient proportion of Simmel's sociological work translated into English to make the project of this thesis achievable. The attempt to understand Simmel and Goffman in their own terms is also the justification for the liberal and sometimes extensive use of quotations from their work. It has been said that extensive quotation in scholarly work is rather like the lamp-post a drunk leans against: more a source of support than illumination. But if an immanent understanding of the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman is to be pursued, then quotation is essential so as not to distort their ideas. Besides, both writers are eminently quotable, *masters of intellectual flashiness* to put the matter crudely. As such it is hoped that the manner of exposition does not prove unduly onerous to readers.

This chapter presents a picture of the development of Simmel's sociological work. It commences with a review of his early intellectual career before considering selected aspects of his sociology, in particular highlighting the steps towards the construction of the mature formal sociology. Simmel's fragmentary, essayistic style has led many commentators to treat items of his work in isolation as self-contained entities; indeed, this is one strength of the style. The following account is designed to contextualise the individual items and to relate

them to the overarching theme of social differentiation, an abiding interest of Simmel. Consequently, a good deal of space is devoted to The Philosophy of Money in which this theme achieves fullest prominence. In this way it is hoped to show that Simmel's work comprises a systematic whole and is very definitely something more than an unconnected bundle of illuminating essays and books.

## 1.2 Simmel's Early Intellectual Development

Friedrich Eduard Georg Simmel was born on 1 March 1858 in Berlin, the seventh and youngest child of a chocolate merchant. Simmel's parents, although of Jewish origin, were baptised as Protestants, a faith Simmel also professed, albeit weakly. He was educated at the Gymnasium Friedrich Werder in Berlin and - from the summer semester of 1876 - at that city's university. His initial studies were in history under Droysen, Mommsen, von Sybel, von Treitschke, Grimm and Jordan. His interests then shifted towards the ethnopsychology of Lazarus and Bastian before settling on philosophy, in which he named Zeller and Harms as influential teachers (the principal source of this biographical information is Landmann's 'Bausteine', 1958). Simmel originally submitted a doctoral dissertation which dealt with psychological and ethnological aspects of the origins of music (translated as Simmel 1968: 98-140) in December 1880, but the Philosophy Faculty could not agree to accept it. They found it at variance with the conventions of scholarly work: poorly written, inadequately referenced, full of misspellings etc. Instead, they recommended

that Simmel present an earlier essay on Kant's various theses on the nature of matter; the essay had won the royal prize in a competition held by the Faculty in 1880. On 25 February 1881 Simmel was awarded the Dr.Phil. degree for a dissertation entitled The nature of matter according to Kant's physical monadology (the rejected dissertation on the beginnings of music was later published - in a largely uncorrected form - in Lazarus's journal, the Zeitschrift fur Volkenspsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft in 1882). Simmel continued his studies at Berlin University and by November 1883 had met the dissertation requirement of the Habilitation with a study of Kant's concept of pure representation and his theory of synthetic judgements (Landmann 1958:20). However, there was a gap of some 15 months between the acceptance of the Habilitation dissertation and Simmel's eventual graduation. This was apparently created by Simmel's unsatisfactory performance at the public or trial lecture which constituted another element of the Habilitation. According to the Simmel family tradition, Simmel responded to the questioning of one senior academic in a way that was construed as offhand and sarcastic, and he was sent home for six months 'so that he should ponder how one behaves toward worthy older scholars' (ibid:21). Following his Habilitation in January 1885 Simmel was appointed Privatdozent, an untenured appointment in which the holder was dependent on student fees for an income. From the very beginning Simmel was a popular lecturer, so much so that by the 1890s he was teaching in the University's largest lecture halls.

Little is known of Simmel's early career at the University of Berlin. In the years up to 1890 Simmel published articles on Dante, pessimism, the freeing of the Prussian peasantry, Goethe, social ethics, Michelangelo, money, women and Rembrandt. He lectured on Kant, ethics, pessimism, Darwin, theories of science, and problems of social science (see Gassen, 1958:324-325;345). Evolutionary thought, especially as exemplified by Darwin and Herbert Spencer, was an important influence on Simmel at this time (Honigsheim, 1959:170-172). Spencer's achievement was to generalise the theory of evolution so that it became applicable to all phenomena, including social phenomena. For Spencer evolution is:

'... an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from a relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation' (1937:358-359; italics removed)

These ideas, as we shall see, are strongly evident in On Social Differentiation but are also present in a residual and attenuated way in The Philosophy of Money and Sociology.

### 1.3 On Social Differentiation

Simmel's first major work in sociology, On Social Differentiation: Sociological and Psychological Investigations (1890), represents an important statement of his early and developing sociological ideas. Despite the ambiguity of its title, the lineaments of the mature formal sociology are in



evidence. It is worth noting that Simmel did not teach a course entitled 'Sociology' until 1894 (but then taught a course with that title every year until 1908 when Sociology was published), although in 1887 he had begun lecturing on 'Ethics with Special Reference to Sociological Problems' (Gassen, 1958:345-349). On Social Differentiation is of relevance to this discussion not only in its own right but also for Simmel's examination of the basic premises he makes about the nature of social life and of the kind of knowledge sociology can obtain about it, as well as for its anticipations of later topics and themes.

The first of the six chapters of On Social Differentiation is entitled 'On the epistemology of social science'. In it Simmel presents three important arguments. First of all, Simmel asks the question: what makes sociology a distinctive science? how is it to be demarcated from neighbouring disciplines such as history and psychology? To answer, sociology is the science of social facts, is insufficient, since several social sciences address that domain. Rather, the solution is sought in the clarification of sociology's distinctive standpoint. Simmel maintains that:

'... in the last instance, there is no science whose content emerges out of mere objective facts, but rather always entails their interpretation and ordering according to categories and norms that exist a priori for the relevant science.' (cited in Frisby 1981:37-38)

Sociology's distinctive standpoint is to address the interaction of the parts that make up society, ie individuals and groups, and

this emphasis on interaction is but a particular application of the 'regulative world principle' enunciated by Simmel: 'everything interacts in some way with everything else, that between every point in the world and every other force permanently moving relationships exist' (cited in Frisby 1981:41).

This leads to Simmel's second argument which concerns the nature of society. Simmel sought a middle position between those (such as Dilthey) who saw society as nothing more than 'constellations of individuals who are the actual realities' since in this conception the very notion of society 'evaporates' and those (such as Comte and Spencer) who hypostatized society in a way that made it separate from, and perhaps opposed to, the individual (ibid:40). Rather, society is 'only the name for the sum of these interactions ... (between the) empirical atoms, (the) conceptions, individuals and groups that function as unities' (Simmel, cited in ibid:41).

Simmel's third argument concerns the possibility of obtaining strict laws in psychology and sociology. In both disciplines the complexity of the subject matter rules out any hope of attaining strict causal laws in the natural scientific sense. In respect of both individuals and societies, there are too many processes and forces in operation for cause and effect relationships to be clearly identified. Moreover, the totality itself (ie the given individual or society) is constantly

changing with the consequence that any tentatively formulated causal relationship would very likely soon be invalidated.

In the second chapter of the book Simmel examines collective responsibility in societies with varying degrees of social differentiation. Like Durkheim in The Division of Labour in Society Simmel suggests that the low levels of differentiation in primitive societies makes it difficult to distinguish between the deeds of the individual and the deeds of the collectivity and thus the consequences of an individual criminal act become a problem for the entire collectivity. The social differentiation characteristic of more complex societies loosens this close association of the individual and the collectivity, thus encouraging the growth of individuality. Moreover, in more complex societies a clear distinction between individual and collective responsibility emerges. The collectivity removes some of the moral burden from the individual, as in the case of state compensation for accident victims.

The contribution of group size to the development of individuality is the theme of the third chapter (a later version of which appeared in Sociology and has been translated into English; see Levine, ed, 1971: 251-293). To begin with, Simmel proposes that individuality greatly increases with the size of the group of which the individual is a member since more 'space' or 'room' is available for the development of individuality. Simmel explores some of the ways in which distinctive life styles are engendered by large groups which permit greater social

differentiation. Many of Simmel's observations approach 'if ... then' propositional form, but Simmel is quite adamant that these are not causal sociological laws but rather propositions which have the status of 'a phenomenological formula that seeks to conceptualize the regular outcome of regularly coexisting sequences of events' (1971:257). This qualification, Frisby reminds us, runs against any simple conception of 'a naturalistic "geometry" of social life' (1984a:82). Simmel also states his opposition to the deterministic notion about the human individual that often run alongside naturalistic conceptions of sociology, emphasising that 'a person is never merely a collective being, just as he is never merely an individual being' (1971:261). The elementary unidirectionalities found in positivist conceptions of sociology cannot provide a measured understanding of social life; thus, for example, Simmel is at pains in this chapter to stress that whilst group enlargement enhances individuality, individuality on the part of the group's constituents is also necessary for further group enlargement.

The fourth chapter examines internal dynamics of the social group and makes much of the distinction between the individual and the mass. A mass, such as a crowd, exhibits little differentiation and tends to be guided by emotive appeals, since it must draw on what is common to all (a kind of lowest common denominator principle). Individuals exhibit greater differentiation and are guided by their capacity for reason. In the crowd, therefore, the individual may sense an intensification of feeling. Moreover, social groups often have a sense of sure

purposefulness that is lacking in the individual who is 'pushed hither and thither by contradictory impressions, impulses and thoughts' and whose mind 'offers at each moment a multitude of possibilities for action' (Simmel, cited in Frisby 1984a:84). This purposefulness arises out of the group's capacity to fuse individual dispositions, to work a kind of 'condensation of individuals' (Simmel, in *ibid*:85).

In a chapter translated as 'The intersection of social spheres' (Simmel 1976) Simmel explores the consequences of the modern individual's membership of a multiplicity of diverse social groups. In modern societies the individual may belong to a wide range of social spheres or circles: not only the family which, as in earlier societies, remains a primary source of attachment, but also various work and leisure associations as well as more diffuse social circles such as nationality or 'the republic of letters'. The relationship of the individual to these latter circles is based on 'an objective similarity of character, inclination and activity, etc' (*ibid*:96). The group memberships serve as a system of co-ordinates which precisely define the particular individual, as such constituting the very basis of his individuality. There is, Simmel suggests, 'vast scope for individual differentiation arising from the fact that the same person may simultaneously occupy quite different relative positions within various spheres' (*ibid*:99). Simmel explores the consequences for the individual of membership of social circles, noting how more closely-knit circles develop a particular sense of 'honour' and examining the effects of

cross-cutting allegiances. Much is made of the powerful psychological identification generated by some occupational circles such as the medieval guild. Simmel also presents some intriguing comments about the situation of women and the modern feminist movement. He argues that modern feminism could only arise as a consequence of an extensive division of labour which differentiates the situations of women and thus highlights the situation of women in general. The psychological presupposition on which this is based is stated thus: 'people only ever become conscious of ... general concepts as a result of different individual manifestations' (ibid:104).

Simmel's basic contention in the final chapter, 'Differentiation and the principle of saving energy', is that upward evolutionary development is governed by an impulse to save energy:

'Any being is superior to the extent that it achieves the same end with less energy. All culture aspires not only to harness more and more natural energy to our ends, but also to achieve all such ends in ways that save more and more energy' (1976: 111)

The evolutionary advantage conferred by differentiation is that energy is saved. Thus a division of labour that differentiates mental and physical activity permits the enhancement of mental activities in a society, since some are allowed the leisure to think, discuss and write free from worries about the material production of subsistence needs. However, Simmel is also very well aware of 'the dangers of excessive individualization and

division of labor' which, from the point of view of energy-saving, concern the atrophy of unused capacities: 'one-sided exertion reaches the very organ it was intended to strengthen, because it affects the constitution of the entire organism, which is weakened by the neglect of other organs necessitated by such exertion' (ibid:121). Simmel reviews differentiation's energy-saving possibilities in several social spheres, including the economy, the church and the military. He then arrives at 'a fundamental contradiction':

'The fact is that differentiation of the social group is evidently directly opposed to that of the individual. The former requires that the individual must be as specialized as possible, that some single task must absorb all his energies and that all his impulses, abilities and interests must be made compatible with this one task... The differentiation of the individual, by contrast, entails precisely the rejection of specialization. It breaks down the interwoven capacities of will and thought and develops each of them into an independent quality' (ibid:130).

Small wonder, Simmel concludes, that the frequency of 'so-called problematic characters' increases in modern society, since the individual's multiple group memberships will eventually heighten his awareness of 'unsatisfiable needs within himself' (ibid:132, 131).

Simmel's 1890 book was just one of a number of studies published in the final decade of the nineteenth century which dealt with the division of labour and social differentiation; testimony indeed to the impact made by Darwin's evolutionary theory on very many domains of intellectual life. Durkheim neatly

summarised the distinctive feature of On Social Differentiation in stating that for Simmel, 'it is not a question of the division of labour specifically, but the process of individuation in general' (1933: 46n.11). The book is primarily concerned with how social differentiation promotes the development of human individuation. The book also marks an important stage in the theoretical development of Simmel's sociology which Frisby sums up as follows:

'A precondition for social interaction is individual differentiation. In Simmel's early formulation of sociology's task as the study of social interaction, individual and social differentiation must be presupposed' (1984a:52)

Moreover, whilst the formal premises of his sociology had yet to be developed, the book also contains early formulations of topics and themes that were to occupy Simmel's attention at much greater length in the subsequent two decades; including money, the tragedy of culture, fashion and the role of women. It was these two decades which were to be Simmel's major period of productivity in sociology.

#### 1.4 The Emergence of Formal Sociology

During the early 1890s Simmel succeeded in crystallising the basic premises of his mature conception of sociology. At this time Spencer gives way to Nietzsche as a major intellectual influence on Simmel (Scaff, 1988), although traces of Spencerian evolutionism can be found throughout his sociological work and the issues posed by evolutionary theory



were still to occupy Simmel in his major treatise on the character of modern society, The Philosophy of Money (1900). In addition, Simmel gave his first course at Berlin University, entitled 'Sociology' in the spring semester of 1894, a course he was to teach under that or a similar title each year up until 1908, the year Sociology was published (see Gassen, 1958). During this decade Simmel also began to produce sociologically-oriented papers on money, the family, fashion and the like, and also early versions of chapters two, three and eight of Sociology. These will not be discussed here. Instead the important programmatic paper 'The problem of sociology' and the intriguingly-entitled 'Sociological aesthetics' will be examined, for they provide important clues to the nature and scope of the mature formal sociology.

By 1890 Simmel had formulated a clear conception of society as consisting of the reciprocal influences of its constituent parts. However, it is the paper of 1894, 'The problem of sociology' (published in Schmoller's Jahrbuch and translated into English with a 'Supplementary note' the following year) which first presents his mature thoughts on the nature and scope of the discipline of sociology. The great accomplishment of historical science and the moral sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) in the nineteenth century was to conceive of history and human action in terms of social factors instead of individual careers: 'the science of human beings has become the science of human society' (1895:412) Simmel declares. But acknowledgement of the role of the social is insufficient to

ground sociology as an independent science. As matters stand, Simmel argues, sociology is far too general and all-encompassing a sphere of investigation, is 'nothing more than a group-name for the totality of moral sciences' and is fast becoming a repository for 'those empty generalities and abstractions which brought about the ruin of philosophy' (ibid:413). If sociology is to become 'a true science', then its subject matter must be clearly mapped out; to allow sociology to persist as a discipline coterminous with social science in general will not assist its development.

Simmel comments upon the parallel case of psychology. Sometimes it has been claimed that psychology is the master science, since everything that occurs is an event in mind. However, psychology as a science has advanced only by identifying as its subject-matter the 'specifically psychical' aspects of consciousness. Similarly, Simmel recommends that sociology 'should treat of the specifically social, the process and forms of socialization [ie 'sociation' - GS], as such, in contrast to the interests and contents which find expression in socialization' (ibid:414). The central distinction between form and content is introduced in the following terms:

'The particular causes and aims, without which socialization never takes place, comprise, to a certain extent, the body, the material of the social process. That the result of these causes, and the pursuance of these aims call forth, among the persons concerned, a reciprocal relationship, or a socialization, this is the form, in which the content of social organization clothes itself' (1895:414)

Simmel continues:

'The entire existence of a special science of society rests upon the isolation of this form by means of scientific abstraction' (ibid).

Sociation can arise for diverse ends and in varied settings - in a religious congregation, a band of conspirators, an art school, a family - and yet display 'formal similarities' in its characteristics and development, such as authority and subordination, competition, imitation, opposition and division by labour. It is the possibility of finding these formal similarities in sociation by a process of scientific abstraction that gives sociology its distinctive subject matter. The special object of investigation for sociology is somewhat paradoxically stated as 'that which in society is "Society"' (ibid:417).

It is this that provides the guiding orientation for sociology as a special science and demarcates it from other social sciences. All investigation involves an abstraction. History, for example, is not interested in 'everything that Frederick II or Maria Theresa did from morning till night', but only those events which appear relevant under 'the concept of the politically important' (ibid:416). Similarly, sociology's analytical focus is not social phenomena as such but rather 'all those inter-subjective relations which bring it to pass that individuals become societies' (ibid:421). Sociology is the science which investigates the forms of these 'inter-subjective

relations'. Consequently, 'it is the only science which really seeks to know only society, sensu strictissimo' (ibid:422).

What are the principles according to which sociological investigations, thus conceived, are to be prosecuted? First of all, if forms are to be abstracted or inductively-derived from historical facts, then certain psychological premises must be taken as foundational. In order to understand processes of sociation, the investigator must possess a grasp of psychological phenomena such as seeking and giving help, love and hate, avarice, pleasure in social intercourse, self-preservation and so on, since these comprise social motives, 'psychical states and actions which proceed only from social contact' (1895:418) and are thus essential for any adequate analysis of sociation.

The investigation itself may take either 'the longitudinal direction of a particular evolution' ie a historical approach, or it may endeavour to provide 'a cross-sectional view of such evolutions' (ibid) ie an analytical approach. The historical approach examines phenomena with an eye to thematising the development of forms of sociation such as authority and subordination or the modifications in form brought about by quantitative changes. The analytical approach (which Simmel's subsequent work was much to favour), 'paralyzes the material differences of the individuals and lays bare by induction that which is common to them all, the social forms as such' (ibid).

In 'The problem of sociology' Simmel adds the pivotal form-content distinction to his previously (1890) formulated

associational conception of society in order to present a new point of view that sharply demarcates sociology's interest from other social sciences. A subject-matter is opened up to empirical investigation by means of the adoption of a distinct sociological viewpoint. It is important to note that Simmel sees the abstraction of the forms as an inductive procedure. His programme is decidedly not deductive in character: Simmel is not proposing the deductive analysis of social life from some set of master principles but is rather recommending an inductive analysis of the empirical phenomena of sociation guided by the form-content distinction. In this way sociology can proceed as an empirical discipline whose interests are clearly marked off from neighbouring social sciences.

An important clue to the guiding principles which will inform Simmel's inductive abstractions of feature of the forms of sociation is given in 'Sociological aesthetics' (1896; English translation, 1968). In this essay Simmel's lifelong interest in artistic topics is conjoined to his maturing sociological perspective. He begins by setting out the constituent features of 'the essence of aesthetic contemplation and interpretation':

'What is unique emphasizes what is typical, what is accidental appears as normal, and the superficial and fleeting stands for what is essential and basic. It seems impossible for any phenomenon to avoid being reduced to what is important and of eternal value. Even the lowest, intrinsically ugly phenomenon can be dissolved into contexts of color and form, of feeling and experience, which provide it with exciting significance. To involve ourselves deeply and lovingly with even the most common product, which would be banal and repulsive in its isolated appearance, enables us to conceive of it, too, as a ray and image of the final

unity of all things from which beauty and meaning flow ... Every point [of the world] contains within itself the potential of being redeemed to absolute aesthetic importance. To the adequately trained eye the totality of beauty, the complete meaning of the world as a whole, radiates from every single point.' (1968:69)

As we shall see, these remarks could with equal facility apply to his stance towards sociological topics, and indeed this is precisely the argument developed by the Lukacs/Frisby interpretation of Simmel as a 'sociological impressionist' (see also Davis, 1973).

Simmel proposes that a lower level of the aesthetic drive is evident in the system-building which organises objects into symmetric pictures. Both despotism and socialism endeavour to organise society along rational, symmetrical lines and Simmel is in no doubt that part of the appeal of socialist society is an aesthetic one: no wasteful conflict or competition but rather a harmony between the interests of the society and the individual. The alternative to symmetry and logical closure is to allow the elements of life to develop immanently, according to their own conditions.

Finally Simmel proposes that 'the intrinsic significance of artistic styles can be interpreted as a result of different distances which they produce between us and phenomena' (1968:77). Contact with art forms alters how we look at reality. Art forms make some part of reality intelligible to us, but they do so because they abstract from the immediacy of the naturally experienced world. Modern art forms, and certain features of

modern culture such as the dissolution of traditional family ties, the growth of mass society and in particular the enormous consequences of the 'steadily deeper penetration of a money economy' (1968:79) into social life, yield a tendency to put greater and greater distance between human beings and the objects they create. Here again there are anticipations of later arguments which Simmel was to articulate concerning the tragedy of culture and the wideranging ramifications of the money economy.

Sociological work for Simmel involves one type of abstraction from material reality and artistic work a somewhat differing type but both endeavour to abstract the universal from the particular. As we shall see, in The Philosophy of Money in particular Simmel uses the essentially artistic method of scrutinising 'fortuitous fragments' of reality in order to gain access to the social, a totality which of course can never be grasped in its wholeness, which always eludes definitive description. Mention should also be made to Simmel's The Problems of the Philosophy of History, the first edition of which appeared in 1892. Simmel decisively rejects any type of historical realism which asserts that historical science can mirror events as they really happened. History is rather what the historian considers culturally relevant. In the production of historical knowledge the 'formative power' (1977:IX) of the investigator's mind, the categories of historical relevance utilised, are the critical determinant. In view of the complexity of historical reality on the one hand and the

selectivity of historical knowledge on the other, any attempt to formulate laws of history is misguided and doomed to failure.

This conclusion certainly places Simmel at some distance removed from revolutionary Marxism. Nevertheless, according to Frisby Simmel 'stood very close to socialist circles' (1984a:73) in the early 1890s and identified himself with the socialist movement of his day. This is perhaps one source of what might be termed Simmel's possibilism, his interest in alternatives to current social arrangements and forms of sociation.

## 1.5 The Philosophy of Money

### 1.5.1 Simmel's Aims

Like On Social Differentiation, Simmel's second major book in sociology, published in 1900, remains concerned with the overall characterisation of modern society and its contrasts with pre-modern types. In this respect Simmel is at one with the work of other major figures in the classical tradition of sociology, but he departs company from them in locating the major axis of change in the advent of a monetarised economy rather than variants of the pre-industrial/industrial capitalism distinction. For Simmel it is the replacement of seigneurial dues and other forms of barter by money as the medium of economic exchange which has far-reaching social consequences for the broad character of modern society.



Anthony Giddens (1968:138) refers to The Philosophy of Money as 'one of the neglected classics of sociology'. One source and expression of this neglect is that a full English translation did not appear until 1978. Another reason for its neglect lies in its manifestly unsociological title: 'money' is a topic of primary interest to economists whilst 'philosophy' suggests an approach and concerns at variance with the usual concerns of sociology. Yet there is much within the book that is of unquestionable relevance to sociology.

The Philosophy of Money was long in the making. Some of its central themes were sketched in a paper entitled 'The psychology of money' which Simmel presented to Schmoller's seminar in May 1889. Simmel worked on the book through the 1890s when, as we have seen, his mature sociological views crystallised. But in addition to its sociological and psychological analyses it also contains lineaments of Simmel's philosophy of culture and, the project that was to occupy his last years, a metaphysics of life. In this sense it is a transitional work which articulates certain of Simmel's then-current sociological concerns but also foreshadows some of his final intellectual preoccupations.

What does 'philosophy' in the title tell us about the approach and issues dealt with by the book? For Simmel philosophy is a very general and basic mode of reflection upon human existence. It is general in that philosophy's problem is 'nothing less than the totality of being' (1978:56) and it is

basic in that 'the philosophical mode of cognition is the primitive mode, is a mere estimate of the phenomena' (ibid:53). Thus conceived, philosophy can address those questions which lie outside the empirical sciences. The empirical science concerned with money is of course economics, but Simmel is adamant that 'not a single line of these investigations is meant to be a statement about economics' (ibid:54). What, then, are the issues addressed by The Philosophy of Money?

The 'analytical part' examines those 'preconditions that, situated in mental states, in social relations and in the logical structure of reality and values, give money its meaning and its practical position' (ibid). These preconditions lie outside history, are universal in character but nevertheless are realised in history. Thus the analytical part of The Philosophy of Money promises to address those historically-transcendent conditions which determine the significance of the existence of money.

The 'synthetic part' of the book starts from the historical phenomenon of money and asks, what are 'its effects upon the inner world - upon the vitality of individuals, upon the linking of their fates, upon culture in general?' (ibid). As these effects have not yet been studied empirically - although Simmel acknowledges that they could be - the provisional procedure of philosophy can be used to provide an initial orientation. And presumably it is because sociology and psychology could explore this area empirically that the synthetic

part of the book is of most interest to readers from those disciplines.

Simmel summarises the organisation of the book as follows:

'The one part seeks to make the essence of money intelligible from the conditions and conventions of life in general; conversely the other part seeks to make the essence and organization of the latter intelligible from the effectiveness of money' (ibid)

In one sense, the first part of the book deals with issues which lie outside the remit of the sociology and psychology whilst the second part investigates issues which do reside with the remit of these sciences, but which they have yet to examine systematically. Philosophy is the discipline which can make inroads into both areas: no other discipline can accommodate the abstract and general topics of the first area, whilst it is also a discipline which can provide initial orientation towards the second. That, at least, is Simmel's estimation of the position and his justification for pursuing a philosophy of money. Moreover, the abstractions generated by this approach, Simmel argues, are not pursued solely for their own sake; rather the abstractions should inform (and be informed by) our understanding of particular instances. In a passage strongly reminiscent of his 1896 remarks on the essence of aesthetic contemplation and interpretation (cf.1.4 above) Simmel writes:

'The unity of these investigations does not lie, therefore, in an assertion about a particular content of knowledge and its gradually accumulating proofs but

rather in the possibility - which must be demonstrated - of finding in each of life's details the totality of its meaning' (1978:55)

Thus Simmel well-comprehends the scope of empirical science and is clear about its difference from his own aesthetically-guided philosophy. His enterprise is not the scientific documentation of empirical regularities but rather a philosophy that can 'relate the details and superficialities of life to its most profound and essential movements' (1978:55). Thus articulated is the programme justifying the scope of Simmel's philosophy of money (see also Simmel 1959c).

Philosophy is the label that Simmel employs to explore the range of issues about money which he considers important. The net is cast wide enough to embrace topics amenable to investigation by the empirical sciences. But the controlling notion which holds the whole book together is the idea that certain very fundamental aspects of money as it conditions, and is conditioned by human existence, are to be addressed. This is perhaps most coherently expressed in the methodological intention which situates the work in relation to Marx:

'The attempt is made to construct a new storey beneath historical materialism such that the explanatory value of the incorporation of economic life into the causes of intellectual culture is preserved, while these economic forms themselves are recognized as the result of more profound valuations and currents of psychological or even metaphysical pre-conditions ... Every interpretation of an ideal structure by means of an economic structure must lead to the demand that the latter in turn be understood from more ideal depths, while for those depths themselves the general economic

base has to be sought, and so on indefinitely.'  
(1978:56)

This methodological intention underlines one aspect of Simmel's relativism. No single analytical standpoint can hope to exhaust the complex totality of reality.

The Philosophy of Money is a detailed, ingenious, subtle and richly allusive work that consequently defies easy summary. What follows is therefore a highly selective sketch of Simmel's treatment of money which concentrates on its leading sociological themes.

#### 1.5.2 Value and Money

Simmel begins by presenting a theory of value which emphasises the individual's demand for goods along with a view of the economy in which exchange and not production are central. Any object, person or event that can be desired has value, and the subjective origin<sup>of</sup> value itself derives from the 'distance, obstacles and difficulties' (ibid:66) that lie in the path of the realisation of the individual's desire. An object's value, however, becomes objectified when it is exchanged for another object, for in the exchange relation an objective measurement of subjective valuations is presupposed (ibid:81). Simmel recognises that the exchange notion can be generalised to interpret most relationships between people, but the exchange that occurs in interaction between persons differs from economic exchange in that there is no necessary element of 'sacrifice', only the expenditure of 'personal energy'. Simmel argues that

'when we share our intellectual resources in a discussion, they are not thereby reduced; when we display the image of our personality, and take in those of other people, our possession of ourselves is not at all reduced by this exchange' (ibid:82); but in economic exchange value is created because goods or labour are sacrificed. Furthermore, Simmel emphasises that exchange is not a quality additional to any relationship but a feature of the relationship between the parties involving possession and sacrifice, gaining something for which something else has been lost. Simmel issues a warning about reifying 'exchange'. With characteristic playfulness, Simmel moves straight from the economic to the erotic sphere, arguing that although a kiss is 'exchanged' between persons, no-one seriously considers the kiss as 'something beyond the movement and experiences of two pairs of lips' (ibid:83). So it is, too, in respect of economic exchange: there is no additional element tacked on to the transaction; it is rather simply a distinctive feature of the transaction.

Whilst holding that interaction is a broader and more comprehensive concept than exchange, Simmel is nonetheless impressed by the omnipresence of exchange processes, writing that 'exchange is a sociological phenomena sui generis, an original form and function of social life' (ibid:100). Exchange is one very basic form of sociation and reflection on its features leads Simmel to the following statement about the general nature of society:

'... society is a structure that transcends the individual, but that is not abstract. Historical life

thus escapes the alternative of taking place either in individuals or in abstract generalities. Society is the universal which, at the same time, is concretely alive. From this arises the unique significance that exchange, as the economic-historical realization of the relativity of things, has for society; exchange raises the specific object and its significance for the individual above its singularity, not into the sphere of abstraction, but into that of lively interaction which is the substance of economic value' (1978:101)

The concept of exchange is central to Simmel's understanding of the economy and consonant with his conception of society as more than a collection of individuals but not a supra-individual entity divorced from interaction. The economy and society are thus conceived by Simmel in a manner consistent with his earlier (1890) enunciated 'regulative world principle'. Within this broad framework Simmel argues that exchange transforms the value of a good into an economic value. The importance of money is that it is 'the pure form of exchangeability' which 'embodies that pure element or function of things, by virtue of which they are economic' (1978:130).

### 1.5.3 The Value of Money as a Substance

Simmel amplifies his views about the nature of interaction, society and the sociological point of view in the course of the second chapter which deals with a range of issues concerning the historical development of money from a substance possessing real value (eg gold coin) to a mere symbol of value (eg a bank note). Describing money as 'entirely a sociological phenomenon, a form of human interaction' (ibid:172) Simmel is drawn to elaborate certain of the basic tenets about social life

assumed by his approach. 'The interaction between individuals is the starting point of all social formations' (ibid:174) he declares but in the course of further development 'higher supra-individual formations' are created. Law, custom and morality are examples of the supra-individual formations which 'in our mind now stand beyond the will and action of the individual as "pure forms"' (ibid). Money is also a supra-individual pure form: 'the function of exchange, as a direct interaction between individuals, becomes crystallized in the form of money as an independent structure' (1978:175). Moreover, the exchange of possessions is one of the purest forms of sociation, and Simmel adds that it would be misleading to think that

"society" already existed and then brought about acts of exchange, but on the contrary, that exchange is one of the functions that creates an inner bond between men - a society, in place of a mere collection of individuals. Society is not an absolute entity which must first exist so that all the individual relations of its members - super- and subordination, cohesion, imitation, division of labour, exchange, common attack and defence, religious community, party formations and many others - can develop within its framework or be represented by it: it is only the synthesis or general term for the totality of these specific interactions' (ibid)

Any single interaction can disappear and the society will remain intact, but 'if all interaction ceases there is longer any society' (ibid). It is society thus conceived that is the proper object of the 'sociological world view' which endeavours to reconcile 'the material reality of singular instances with the depth and scope of a formal universality ... to derive the



singular from the general without sacrificing its material reality; for society is universal but not abstract' (ibid:202). Once more, we are furnished with evidence of Simmel's endeavour to establish as sociology's proper focus of inquiry an objectified, but not reified aspect of social reality: the forms of sociation.

#### 1.5.4 Money in the Sequence of Purposes

The third chapter of The Philosophy of Money concerns money's utility, its uses. Simmel distinguishes between instinctual behaviour where 'an aimless inner unrest drives us to furious activity' and purposive human action where an activity is undertaken 'in order to attain some precise kind of well-being' (1978:204). Eating and sex to simply satisfy hunger and lust are instinctual behaviours but when they are directed towards attaining a certain kind of pleasure they are purposive actions. Whilst instinctual behaviour can be explained in causal terms, purposive action necessarily requires some reference to the means adopted to obtain the end. Thus causal explanation involves only two elements, a cause and an effect, whilst purposive action involves three: a purpose, the means used to realise the purpose and the realised action. The centrality of means in purposive human action leads Simmel to a consideration of the concept of the tool. Some objects are merely operated upon by humans, as in earth sown with corn; however, a human can 'operate with' a tool and thus 'the tool is an intensified instrument, for its form and existence are predetermined by the end' (ibid:209) sought by the

tool-user. Various social institutions can be regarded as tools which facilitate the realisation of their members' ends, but what particularly interests Simmel is the sense in which money is the purest example of the tool: 'it is an institution through which the individual concentrates his activity and possessions in order to attain goals that he could not attain directly' (ibid:210). Money is a pure tool, is pure instrumentality which is 'totally indifferent' to the objects and services for which it is exchanged. Money has no purpose of its own and thus is fully subservient to human purposes. Its uses are unlimited: 'money has the very positive quality that is designated by the negative concept of lack of character' (ibid:216).

Simmel goes on to propose a link between an interest in acquiring money and the socially marginal. This category of persons are excluded from certain activities and goals within the society and in a sense 'compensate' by accumulating money, an activity from which they cannot be excluded since 'all possible paths constantly lead to it' (ibid:222). Simmel points not only to the obvious example of the Jews in Europe but also to the Huguenots and Quakers, the Parsee in India and the Armenians in Turkey.

Money's primary use in the sequence of human purposes is as a means. However, as the money economy develops money can become an end in itself, indeed money may be 'the most extreme example of a means becoming an end' (ibid:232). Simmel examines the phenomena of avarice and greed, 'those pathological

deformation of the interest in money which increasingly tend to draw in the other cases of the same type' (ibid:241), although he is at pains to emphasise the relativity of these concepts to specific and current economic conditions (ibid:238). Similarly, there is a paired discussion of extravagance and ascetic poverty. 'Money', Simmel observes, 'as long as it really exists merely as money in our hands, is the most indifferent and innocent thing in the world'. But according to the characteristic reasoning of the advocate of poverty as a moral way of life, money is 'the real symbol of the devil, who seduces us under the mask of innocence and simplicity, so that the only safeguard against both the devil and money is to keep them at a distance' (ibid:<sup>2</sup>53).

The final pair of processes Simmel examines are the cynicism and blasé attitude 'that are almost endemic to the heights of a money culture' (ibid:255). For Simmel cynicism - which has none of the positive qualities associated with the cynicism of antiquity - holds that all values can be reduced to their most base motives. Differences in value are illusory. Money of course facilitates the reduction of a diversity of values to a single scale of monetary cost. The 'nurseries of cynicism' Simmel suggests, are financial institutions with high turnovers and rapid changes of ownership:

'The more money becomes the sole centre of interest, the more one discovers that honour and conviction, talent and virtue, beauty and salvation of the soul, are exchanged against money and so the more a mocking and frivolous attitude will develop in relation to these higher values that are for sale for the same kind of value as groceries, and that also command a "market price"' (1978:256)

The blasé attitude involves an indifference directed not, as in cynicism, towards how objects, accomplishments, services etc are to be evaluated, but rather directed towards the specific qualities of those objects, accomplishments and services. Under the blasé attitude everything appears 'colourless and without interest'.

The 'particular distinctive charms' of things is devalued when they can be bought for money. Whilst the cynic derives pleasure from the discovery that 'everything and everybody is purchasable' and would not wish to alter his attitude, the blasé person does seek escape from his colourless and unattractive outlook towards the world. The escape manifests itself in 'the craving today for excitement, for extreme impressions, for the greatest speed in its change' (ibid:257). The modern search for mere stimulation in 'impressions, relations and information' means that 'natural excitement increasingly disappears'; moreover, it ceases to be important to find out why we are stimulated by these impressions, relations and information. The cynical and blasé attitudes are indicative of certain ways in which a money culture produces 'an enslavement of life in its means' (ibid).

The last part of the third chapter examines the qualitative changes brought about by quantitative changes in the amount of money possessed. The outstanding quality of money is its quantity: 'with reference to money, we do not ask what and how, but how much .. its quality consists exclusively in its

quantity' (ibid:259). Quantitative differences in money possessed can produce qualitative changes in life-style and outlook depending on whether one is wealthy or poor. Simmel speaks of a 'threshold of economic awareness' (ibid:263) to describe the level of involvement in activities at which we become aware of the economic costs of the activity, and shows the enormous variability and relativity of this threshold within and between societies. Money has direct importance for the threshold of economic awareness, as two of Simmel's examples demonstrate:

'... foolish parents attempt to hold their children back from wilful destruction by asserting that the things they wish to destroy cost money! Instead of explaining to their children the value of the object itself, they immediately react economically only to the idea of money spent ... Presents are often valued only if the giver has spent money on them; to make a present out of one's own possessions seems to be shabby, illegitimate and inadequate ... the awareness of a sacrifice on the part of the giver develops in the receiver only if the sacrifice is made in terms of money' (1978:268-269)

Increasingly in modern society money becomes the absolute standard against which the value of all things are judged. Things are valued because they cost much or cost little. Thus, Simmel concludes 'one of the major tendencies of life - the reduction of quality to quantity - achieves its highest and uniquely perfect representation in money' (ibid:280).

#### 1.5.5 Individual Freedom

It will be recalled that the second, synthetic part of The Philosophy of Money promised to deal with money's 'effects upon the inner world - upon the vitality of individuals, upon the

linking of their fates, upon culture in general' (ibid:54). The second part of the book therefore examines expressly sociological and psychological topics, although the reader may be forgiven for thinking that Simmel had already trodden part of this territory in the latter sections of the first, analytic part (e.g. the discussions of ascetic poverty, extravagance, cynicism and the blasé attitude).

What is the relationship between money and the freedom of the individual? The first of the three chapters of the synthetic part address this question. Simmel argues that since freedom always exists in conjunction with obligations, a historical review of occupational obligations will prove instructive. Simmel compares the obligations of the slave (which refer to the slave's entire person) with those of the feudal peasant (which extend to the products of the peasant's labour) and the modern worker (which are restricted to the sphere of the worker's products). Money serves to minimise personal obligations and enhances individual freedom by permitting those obligations to work through the impersonal cash nexus. Among a number of historical illustrations of this process, Simmel compares the position of the feudal peasant with the modern taxpayer. Each year the feudal peasant was required to supply his lord with so much corn, honey, poultry etc. Thus the peasant was required to spend some time and labour every year in producing the goods needed to meet this obligation. The modern taxpayer is not tied in this way; provided he engages in a legitimate calling and pays the state his taxes, due in the

impersonal and universal medium of money, his obligations to the state are satisfied. In turn, the freedom of the modern taxpayer is enhanced because he is allowed to engage in a far wider range of productive activities than the feudal peasant who is, for at least part of the year, obliged to engage in production of a very specific kind simply in order to meet seigniorial dues.

A money economy also liberates people in the sense that it abolishes the zero-sum games that operate in barter. In the latter case, 'whatever is given to one person must be taken away from another' (ibid:289). There is a finite sum of goods in the economy and any good can only be possessed by exchange for another. A's gain is B's loss and vice-versa. But money changes all this by providing an objective, impersonal measure of value. When goods can be bought with money, there is no direct relationship between what A gains and B loses because money mediates the exchange instead of the direct comparison (and frequent lack of complete parity) between A's and B's goods. Thus the money economy increases individual freedom by releasing exchange from the 'primary form of social values in which one person has to be deprived of what the other receives' (ibid:294).

The theory Simmel presents of freedom and social development is not univocal. His basic conception of freedom is 'independence from the will of others' (ibid:300); however, the money-driven process of social development increases the numbers of persons on whom the individual is dependent. These persons

are usually only known to the individual as functionaries, rather than total personalities, as servants, shopkeepers, policemen, whose relationship to the individual runs along the single axis of the activity they perform. This is less a description of the current state of affairs in modern society as it is an account of a general tendency. This tendency would reach its culmination in 'an extreme state socialism' in which every socially important action would become an objective function. Simmel paints the following picture of human action in such a future society:

'Just as today the official takes up a "position" that is objectively pre-formed and that only absorbs quite specific individual aspects or energies of his personality, so a full-fledged state socialism would erect, above the world of personalities, a world of objective forms of social action which would restrict and limit the impulses of individual personalities to very precisely and objectively determined expressions ... the forms of human activity would stand far above the full psychological reality of men, like the realm of Platonic ideas above the real world' (ibid:296-297)

What prevents the realisation of this tendency in the modern capitalist economy is the play of differentiated private interests. The fully monetarised economy on the one hand frees people from the ties of feudal society; on the other it contributes to a restriction on human freedom by making society's members increasingly interdependent. Money creates relationships between people out of these interdependencies, but increasingly these relationships do not involve people as personalities but merely as functionaries.



For Simmel, property 'is nothing but sum total of rights over the object... is the socially guaranteed potentiality for the exclusive enjoyment of an object' (ibid:306,309) and he suggests that money is the most fluid type of property since it can be put to such a great multiplicity of uses. Whilst ownership of country estates and factories impose very definite demands on the activities of individual owners, money imposes few, if any, constraints on its possessor. *Money is the type of property which is most responsive to its owner's will, and therein lies one important facet of money's contribution to a positive conception of freedom, the 'freedom to', which Simmel describes as 'freedom as the articulation of the self in the medium of things' (1978:321).* To own a piano gives the owner the freedom to play it, but that freedom is circumscribed by the owner's skill as a player. Money is the type of property most compliant to our desires because it gives us the opportunity to realise those desires in whatever direction we choose.

Simmel's examination of the paradoxical consequences of money for individual freedom continues with a consideration of the situation of the modern worker. Labour has become a commodity which is purchased from the individual through a contract. Production is pursued for its own sake and the worker's subordination is not personal but objective, a subjection not to an individual owner but to the demands of the task as stated in the contract (ibid:335). The individual's subjectivity is liberated from the work-task: the link between the personal and the economic, characteristic of guild

organisations, is severed. But if this consequence of a money economy is isolating and atomising for the worker, it must be noted that there are other consequences which engender greater interdependence between diverse groups in the economy. In feudal times the individual was dependent upon his group for basic needs whereas in modern society everyone has money which is the 'condensed latent form' in which the individual can lay 'claim to the achievement of others' (ibid:342). Also, various kinds of voluntary associations emerge with the money economy, that is to say associations which have very specific goals to pursue and which absorb only that part of the individual interested in the realisation of these goals (ibid:345).

Money's consequences for individual freedom are thus disintegrating and isolating on the one side, and unifying on the other. That said, it would be wrong to imply that Simmel was equivocal or indifferent to money's consequences, as the following critical note indicates:

'The more the unifying bond of social life takes on the character of an association for specific purposes, the more soulless it becomes. The complete heartlessness of money is reflected in our social culture, which is itself determined by money ... the monetary system leads the individual retrospectively to concentrate upon himself and to leave as objects of personal and emotional devotion on the one hand only the closest individual relations, such as family and friends, and on the other the most remote spheres, such as the mother country or mankind' (1978:346)

Socialism, Simmel acknowledges, seeks to abolish this state of affairs and draws on a 'dual motivation' via (1) an attempt to

re-order the workings of society which would result in a 'rationalization of life towards control of life's chance and unique elements by the law-like regularities and calculations of reason'; (2) an appeal to the 'hollow communistic instincts that ... still lie in the remote corners of the soul' (ibid). As the tone of these comments indicates Simmel is not happy with either motivation and it appears that by 1900 Simmel had decisively departed from his earlier interest in socialism (on which see Frisby 1981:141-145; 1984a:73-76). Instead, he reiterates 'one of the most comprehensive and fundamental sociological norms' namely that 'the enlargement of the group goes hand in hand with the individualization and independence of its individual members', and a money economy is of great importance for group enlargement and thus social development generally (1978:346-347). Sociological 'norms' provide a more adequate, if more pessimistic basis for understanding processes of social development than the 'law-like regularities' of socialism.

#### 1.5.6 The Money Equivalent of Personal Values

Simmel addresses the issue of the introduction of monetary considerations into those spheres of life where highly-esteemed attributes of human beings are evident. Money, in short, can provide a quantitative assessment of the value of human beings. Simmel begins by discussing the practice of wergild or blood money (a money payment to atone a murder) in Anglo-Saxon England and describes the scale of payments which measure the value of the deceased according to his or her social standing.

The Christian Church played an important role in abolishing this and related practices by insisting on the absolute worth of the individual soul as the vehicle of God's grace. The value of the individual is thus quite 'incommensurable with all worldly measures' (1978:362) such as monetary value. Christianity led the way in insisting that there are certain qualities of the individual that ought to lie wholly outside the realm of money payments.

Simmel proceeds to examine certain features of the situation of women. Marriage payments tend to point in opposite directions: marriage by purchase indicates that women are economically valuable, objects to be prized both materially and psychologically, whilst the practice of dowry indicates a recompense for the material support the husband must provide his wife. These practices, let it be noted, are related to wider social structural arrangements. There follows a fascinating account of prostitution which is sensitive to its varied social valuations historically and cross-culturally, whilst also being attuned to the degradation inherent its manifestation in modern society:

'... if we experience in the nature of money itself something of the essence of prostitution. The indifference as to its use, the lack of attachment to any individual because it is unrelated to any of them, the objectivity inherent in money as a mere means which excludes any emotional relationship - all this produces an ominous analogy between money and prostitution. Kant's moral imperative never to use human beings as a mere means but to accept and treat them always, at the same time, as ends in themselves is blatantly disregarded by both parties in the case of prostitution. Of all human relationships, prostitution

is perhaps the most striking instance of mutual degradation to a mere means ...' (1978:376-377)

The phenomenon of bribery is related to prostitution since the chief medium of payment is money which 'does not have a certificate of origin in the way in which, more or less disguised, many concrete objects of possession do' (ibid:385) and which is thus a more appropriate means of ensuring secrecy than other types of payment. Conversely, money is singularly inappropriate for the reward of excellence or distinction (ibid:390-391).

For Simmel the freedom that money gives to the individual is predominantly a negative freedom, freedom from something, than a positive one, freedom to do something. Because possessions can be readily bought and sold, money frees humans from the bondage of owning certain things. But the loosened tie that individuals have with possessions comes at the price of a decreased satisfaction with ownership. Simmel observes that there is a 'modern feeling' expressed in

'... a deep yearning to give things a new importance, a deeper meaning, a value of their own. They have been worn away by the easy gain and loss of possessions, by the transitoriness of their existence, their enjoyability and their change. In short, the consequences of money have made them void and indifferent' (1978:404)

Modern developments in the arts are symptoms of the desire to find a new significance in things. And when those things are personally performed tasks rather than simply objects sold, the

task performer usually expects some kind of acknowledgement or recognition over and above the money payment for the service. Thus applause, fame, gratefulness, reverence, loyalty, satisfaction and the like, are phenomena which indicate that the performer regards value of things to be additional to their money value.

If money is not always an adequate and comprehensive measure of values generated in the economic sphere, what might be? Simmel suggests that the labour theory of value is the philosophically most interesting alternative, but is in the end unacceptable because it cannot adequately deal with the mental element of productive activity.

#### 1.5.7 The Style of Life

In the final chapter Simmel brings together his ideas about money's impact on modern culture. To begin with he proposes that intellectual psychic energies come to preponderate over emotional or sentimental energies in the money economy. Actions that were once pursued for their own satisfactions, especially in the sphere of production for subsistence, are now reconceived in monetary terms and thus become the focus of intellectual rather than emotional energy. Money generates a view of life as an objective web, an orderly whole, because money is the precise and objective measure of the value of things (ibid:431). The features of money and the intellect mirror each other: both lack character or distinctiveness, both are

supra-personal in content, and both serve individualistic and egoistic functions.

Money's influence can also be seen in the emergence of the leading feature of the intellectualism of modern times, its calculative outlook:

'... one may characterise the intellectual functions that are used at present in coping with the world and in regulating both individual and social relations as calculative functions. Their cognitive ideal is to conceive of the world as a huge arithmetical problem, to conceive events and the qualitative distinction of things as a system of numbers' (1978:444).

The vernacular connotation of 'calculative', implying egoism, well describes the direction taken by the calculative outlook in modern society.

The influence of money on the development of the calculative outlook may be readily appreciated: 'the money economy enforces the necessity of continuous mathematical operations in our daily transactions' (ibid). The precision and exactness that money brings to the economic sphere spills over into other aspects of life. Money's influence is analogous to the changes brought about by the advent of the pocket watch:

'The mathematical character of money imbues the relationship of the elements of life with a precision, a reliability in the determination of parity and disparity, an unambiguosness in agreements and arrangements in the same way as the general use of pocket watches has brought about a similar effect in daily life. Like the determination of abstract value by money, the determination of abstract time by clocks provides a system for the most detailed and definite arrangements and measurements that imparts otherwise unattainable transparency and calculability to the

contents of life, at least as regards their practical management' (1978:445-446)

Needless to say, Simmel's analysis foreshadows the later, more famed explication of rationalisation by Weber.

If Simmel's analysis of rationalisation foreshadows Weber, then his investigation of alienation echoes Marx. Indeed, Turner (1986:104) goes so far as to suggest that 'it is not Lukacs but Simmel who, so to speak, unwittingly reconstructed Marx's analysis of money as alienation from the 1844 manuscripts' (which were not discovered until 1930). However, the sources of this alienation are not the social relations demanded by a capitalist economy but the division of labour which engenders an increasing discrepancy between objective culture, the objectified totality of the products of human energies, embracing tools, transport, science, technology, art, organisations and traditions and more, and subjective culture, that part of the totality that can be absorbed by an individual. In the sphere of production the division of labour diverts into excessively specialised tasks 'energies that are indispensable for the harmonious growth of the self' (1978:454). The worker becomes divorced from the products of his labour which ceases to be a creative expression of his subjectivity. Modern, highly differentiated productive activity is contrasted with artistic work, which typically involves a single producer whose product reflects 'his innermost core' (ibid:455) and medieval custom work, which gave both producer and consumer a 'personal relationship to the commodity' (ibid:457).



Additionally, the worker is separated from the means of production. The capitalist now acquires, organises and allocates the means of production. Labour has become a commodity, and the worker is separated from his work thusly objectified. For Simmel this trend signifies that 'work has become something objectively separate from the worker, something that he not only no longer is, but also no longer has' (ibid:456). These consequences, it should be noted, follow from the advance of the division of labour in Simmel's analysis and are not seen as specific to capitalism.

The sense of being estranged from modern life is also evident in the division of labour's consequences for consumption. 'Objects and people have become separated from one another' (ibid:460) because the sheer quantity of objects denies the possibility of a personal relationship to each of them. The assimilation of individual objects is also made more difficult with the increasing prevalence of fashion and more generally by the increasing variety of styles of objects which co-exist in modern life.

These tendencies in production and consumption are indicative of an ever-widening gap between objective and subjective culture. However, Simmel points to the rise of the women's movement as a counter-instance and locates one source of this development in women's dissatisfaction with restrictions of domesticity and married life: 'one might say that the objective spirit of marriage lags behind its subjective spiritual

development' (ibid:464). The general trend of modern life is, nonetheless, in the opposite direction and the outstripping of subjective culture by objective culture is explained by the division of labour which is itself 'an offshoot of the money economy' (ibid:468). Money permits the more calculative approach to production required by division of labour, and it facilitates differentiated consumption.

The final part of the chapter on the money's impact on the style of life examines its distancing functions: the ways in which money puts distance between people and things, other people, interests and relations. Simmel sketches the way money facilitates the development of a world economy, giving nations an interest in one another's economic affairs; how money places people at a distance from the objects from which they derive satisfaction; how urban life, made possible by the money economy, forces a 'particularly abstract existence' (ibid:479) upon people; how credit extends and loosens the control that can be exerted over property; how money contributes to the break-up of the formerly close tie between natural rhythms and work and consumption. Money increases 'the general pace of life' (ibid:506) and symbolises the relative character of human existence. Simmel concludes: 'the more the life of society becomes dominated by monetary relationships, the more the relativistic character of existence finds expression in conscious life, since money is nothing other than a special form of the embodied relativity of economic goods that signifies their value' (ibid:512).

## 1.5.8 Coda

The Philosophy of Money is Simmel's major treatise on the character of modern society. However, since it lacks an analysis of the large-scale structures of modern society, it may be more accurate to depict the book as a major treatise on the character of modernity, the modes of consciousness specific to modern society (cf Frisby, 1985). Simmel takes up the concerns of On Social Differentiation, this time divested of Spencerian evolutionism, and locates in money the source of the ever-increasing processes of differentiation in the world. In The Philosophy of Money we find prominent certain of the central motifs of his sociology: the tendency for quantitative increases to bring about qualitative changes in relationships, the means-ends relation, the notion of distance, and above all, the social bases of individuality. The book also contains important statements of Simmel's now mature thinking about the nature of human society and especially, how it is forged out of the forms of sociation.

Finally, the book exemplifies Simmel's characteristic mode of analysis. For some critics Simmel's method was insufficiently empirical, too 'rationalistic'. Durkheim complained of the 'free reign' given to his imagination and personal feelings at the expense of 'rigorous demonstrations', with the result that Simmel's book falls between two stools:

'... I confess to not attaching a very high price to this type of hybrid-illegitimate [speculation bâtard] where reality is expressed in necessarily subjective

terms, as in art, but also abstractly, as in science. For this very reason, it can offer us neither the fresh and living sensation of things that the artist arouses nor the precision which is the scientist's goal' (Durkheim, 1979:328)

Of course, part of Simmel's justification for attempting a 'philosophy' of money was to escape the constraints of fixed methodological strictures. The philosophical approach undoubtedly lends allusive power to his analyses; in the words of one Berlin contemporary, Simmel finds virtue 'not in grasping things tightly, but in only grazing them' (Altmann, 1903:64). Durkheim is certainly correct when he identifies Simmel's departures from the traditional canons of science; whether Durkheim's authority on artistic matters is to be accepted is, however, a different matter. The issue of Simmel's analytical style is given more extended consideration in a subsequent chapter. Here we need only note that it is not necessary to accept Durkheim's destructive Manicheanism. For what Simmel presents is an aesthetically-inspired and guided philosophical approach that seeks to relate the details and superficial aspects of life to its deepest currents. Simmel reiterates the view earlier expressed in 'Sociological aesthetics':

'The essential meaning of art lies in its being able to form an autonomous totality, or self-sufficient microcosm out of a fortuitous fragment of reality that is tied with a thousand threads to this reality' (1978:495)

Attempting to make the link between the 'fortuitous fragment' and the totality is how Simmel draws inspiration from art, which is

quite far from Durkheim's suggestion that the artist seeks to arouse in us 'the fresh and living sensation of things'. For Simmel art, conceived in fortuitous fragment - totality terms, serves as an adequate model in which to relate particulars to generalities in his analysis of money; an aim admittedly different from but not inconsistent with narrower conceptions of scientific endeavour.

## 1.6 Sociology: Investigations of the Forms of Sociation

### 1.6.1 Preliminary Considerations

Published in 1908, this book represents the culmination of nearly fifteen years' work in sociology. It has yet to be translated in its entirety into English, although versions of large portions of nine of its ten chapters are now available (see Appendix A, confirmed as an accurate record by Wolff, 1989). The piecemeal translation of the book reflects how it has been perceived, by both sympathetic and hostile critics alike, as a collection of essays rather than a systematic treatise. A glance at the table of contents (listed in Appendix A) fails to yield any obvious organising principle and in this respect Sociology compares unfavourably with the elegant organisation of The Philosophy of Money. The latter consists of two parts, 'analytic' and 'synthetic', each comprising three chapters; each chapter is itself subdivided into three sections. In contrast, the table of contents of Sociology not only appears to lack an organising principle, it has a somewhat disorderly look to it in consequence of the inclusion of several 'Excursus' or digressions (printed in smaller type in the text of the German original) in seven of the chapters. (It will be argued subsequently - section 1.7 below - that this disorderliness is more apparent than real.)

For these reasons, then, translation into English has been piecemeal. In fairness to the translators, it should also be said that the actual production of the book has a piecemeal quality to it: Simmel began publishing earlier versions of the chapters of Sociology as journal articles from the mid-1890s (See Gassen, 1958), and chapters 5 and 10 are revised versions of chapters which first appeared in On Social Differentiation (1890).

It must also be noted that Simmel himself contributed to the idea that the book lacked topical coherence and was perhaps weak on thematic coherence. He emphasises the exploratory and provisional nature of his enterprise, adding, 'if I myself stress the wholly fragmentary and incomplete character of this book, I do not do so in order to protect myself in a cheap manner against objections to this character' (1959a:336). He argues that in new areas of scientific inquiry it is inevitable that "the foundation" is less secure than the superstructure erected upon it' (ibid:326) and that an element of intuition is unavoidable, however inimical to the norms of science this may be. (In the light of Popperian and post-Popperian philosophy of science it looks doubtful whether there are any such secure foundations, but such foundations were sought by several of the founding fathers of sociology.) Sociology is only beginning to master the complexity of social life and 'it would be sheer megalomania to expect, at this juncture, complete clarity in the posing of questions and absolute correctness in answering them' (ibid:335). Simmel recognises that it is proper to address methodological questions to his formal sociology, but admits 'I have not been able to

clarify the fundamental idea of the present volume' (ibid:336)

adding:

'... nothing more can be attempted than the establishment of the beginning and direction of an infinitely long road - the pretension to any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at the very least, illusory. Perfection can be obtained here by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see.' (ibid)

What Simmel does stress is a certain way of seeing, a definite sociological viewpoint. His attempt to give the 'fluctuating concept' of sociology an 'unambiguous content' is:

'... dominated by one, methodologically certain, problem-idea. The request to the reader to hold on uninterrupted, to this one method of asking questions as it is developed in the first chapter (since otherwise these pages might impress him as an accumulation of unrelated facts and reflections) - this request is the only matter which must be mentioned at the head of this book.' (from the 'Preface' to Sociology, quoted in Wolff, 1950:xxvi)

For Simmel the book's coherence derives from the application of a consistent methodological stance. Whether any further, thematic coherence can be discerned is a matter which will need to be deferred until after the main topics and arguments of Sociology have been examined, for as Simmel himself acknowledges, the chapter headings are imperfect indications of their content. Wolff's response to Simmel's 'one, methodologically certain, problem-idea' remark is to suggest that 'the ten chapters of Soziologie might be likened to connected nets which must be opened by those who want to know what they contain' (ibid). Let us open some of those nets and inspect their contents.

### 1.6.2 The Problem of Sociology.

Sociology opens with an expanded version of the 1895 essay in which Simmel enlarges upon the programme of formal sociology. The scope and boundaries of sociology as it emerged in the nineteenth century are not certain and Simmel laments the tendency to 'dump' all the historical, social and psychological sciences 'into one great pot labelled "sociology"' (1959a:311). To escape this unproductive state of affairs it is necessary to advance a clear conception of the social realm and a distinctive notion of sociology's method. Simmel proposes that an attempt is made to capitalise upon 'the insight that man, in his whole nature in all his expressions, is determined by living in interaction with other men' (1959a:312) and that these interactions result in 'structures that exist and develop outside the individual' (ibid). Simmel advances his by now well-established view that society consists of, and exists in interaction. Secondly, since all science is based upon abstracting certain elements of the totality from a particular viewpoint, sociology must likewise proceed. It addresses the interaction between individuals (sociation) from a particular viewpoint, distinguishing the form from the contents of sociation. 'Strictly speaking', Simmel argues, the contents of sociation, the psychological and biological conditions resident in the make-up of the individual such as work, religiosity, hunger, love and the like, 'are not social'. But they become factors in sociation when they engender interaction, when 'they transform the mere aggregation of isolated individuals into



specific forms of being with and for one another' (1959a:315). The task of formal sociology is to effect the form-content distinction upon sociation as empirically encountered and to bring together 'systematically under a consistent scientific viewpoint' (1959a:316) descriptions of the forms of sociation. Only then will sociology cease to be a dumping pot and emerge as a special social science with a distinctive approach to a demarcated sphere of social life, namely 'what in "society" really is society' (ibid:320). This special social science is likened to geometry, which abstracts the spatial element from material configurations; formal sociology abstracts the forms from the actualities of social life.

Although Simmel articulates it with greater force and confidence, the scope of formal sociology as a special social science remains more or less identical to the 1895 paper. What is new in the 1908 presentation is the attention given to methodological questions such as the idiographic-nomothetic debate (p.321), the analogy with geometry (ps.321-323), the principles informing the separation of form and content of sociation (p.324) and the points of view from which historical reality can be approached by formal sociology (p.325). Simmel's methodological comments (considered in Chapter 4) are certainly sketchy, especially when compared to, for example, those of Weber or Durkheim, but they represent the fullest articulation he considers he is able to attain. Moreover, it attests to Simmel's unwillingness to permit his work to be constrained by a precise set of rules of procedure. . However there is unquestionably a

convincing basis to formal sociology, and Simmel chooses to make good his claims by showing how the programme works out in practice rather than by engaging in extended methodological disquisition.

Some of the investigations conducted in Sociology, Simmel acknowledges, lie outside what was then taken as the conventional remit of sociology to investigate the 'great organs and systems of society' (guilds, communities, class formations, industrial divisions of labour and military organisations are mentioned). Instead Simmel's interest lies primarily in the 'microscopic-molecular processes' (p.327) which undergird these 'great organs and systems'. These phenomena 'exhibit society ...in statu nascendi' and in fact make up 'the real life of society as we encounter it in our experience' (ibid). It is for this reason that most accounts of the history of microsociology trace its origin back to Simmel, for he was the first to give extended consideration to the ordinary phenomena of everyday social life.

When examining the meaning of 'philosophy' in The Philosophy of Money (section 6.1 above) we noted that it served as a kind of postmanteau-like term which afforded Simmel the opportunity to address a range of questions - existential, epistemological, sociological and psychological - that he considered fundamental to his topic. At the beginning of Sociology, however, we find that Simmel distinguishes between the methodological questions posed by sociology's claim to scientific

status and philosophical questions about knowledge of society. In the latter category, which he later (1917; 1950:23-25) termed 'philosophical sociology', are located epistemology and metaphysics. Epistemology addresses 'the presuppositions of concrete research that cannot be taken care of in research because it is based upon them' (1959a;333); it is by no means clear whether this is an order of questioning distinct from the methodological questions about formal sociology that Simmel has just discussed. Metaphysics goes beyond the questions that the empirical sciences can properly answer to address questions of some absolute significance. Epistemology and metaphysics are philosophical modes of questioning which presuppose society. But the philosophical mode can also address the presuppositions of society. This is not a query about historical societies and individuals, but a very general and abstract question: given that there are individuals, 'what are the conditions for their consciousness that they are social beings?' (p.335) What must be presupposed a priori for the individual to be a social being? This issue is addressed in the 'Excursus on the problem: how is society possible?'

### 1.6.3 How is Society Possible?

Simmel adopts Kant's procedure when the eighteenth century philosopher asked, 'How is nature possible?'. Knowledge of nature was only possible, Kant suggested, because of the existence of certain universal categories of mind which ordered over sense-perceptions and thus made the world intelligible to

us. The categories (time, space, causality etc) served as conditions which made possible knowledge of nature. Simmel's question however, is not about knowledge but about social being: he asks in effect, what are the conditions that make intersubjective social relations possible? If this strikes the modern reader as a somewhat recondite question to pose, let it be noted that for Simmel social being is not the only logical possibility: 'the human species could just as well have been unsocial; just as there are unsocial animal species as well as social ones' (1971:36).

Three conditions are identified (Simmel appears to acknowledge that there may be more). First of all, although we assume that others have a unique individuality, our knowledge of that individuality is derived from the general categories, the typifications of identities we ascribe to the other, as workers, family members, and so on. These categories are imperfect representations of the other, but by supplementing and transforming these 'juxtaposed fragments' we are able to form a picture of 'the completeness of an individuality' (1959b:344). It is through general categories that we come to an appreciation of individuality. These categories are one a priori of empirical social life. But a second a priori asserted by Simmel is that the individual is always something more than, or other than, 'a mere exponent of the social role momentarily ascribed to him' (ibid:346). The role the individual assumes never wholly absorbs his individuality: 'a society is, therefore, a structure which consists of beings who stand inside and outside of it at the same

time' (ibid:347). Or, from the point of view of the individual, society consists of beings who are on the one hand, 'complete social entities' and on the other 'complete personal entities' (ibid:351), the one acting as a precondition for the other. In order to develop the third a priori Simmel paints a picture of society as an 'ideal structure' composed of related positions which must be filled for the society to operate. Against this Simmel posits a view of the individual as a bearer of various needs and capacities which require expression. How is some kind of harmony between the 'needs' of the society thus conceived and the needs of the individual, to be achieved? The solution is provided by the notion of vocation, or role in modern terminology. The individual takes up a vocation such as mother or manager 'on the basis of an inner calling, a qualification felt to be intimately personal' (ibid:354). In this way the society's requirement for certain vocations to be filled is also met.

Thus outlined are three a priori presuppositions or conditions which transform a collection or 'aggregate' of individuals into sociating entities, social beings. This essay brings into sharp relief how Simmel uses his studies of Kant to reap sociological dividends. The procedure is thoroughly Kantian but the novelty of Simmel's approach is to apply it to address an aspect of sociology's fundamental theoretical problem: how social order is produced. Simmel's solution is that it is produced by certain universal cognitive dispositions of individuals whose sociation constitutes society.

Any summary consideration of the nine substantive chapters of Sociology cannot hope to do justice to the range, detail and sensitivity of Simmel's analyses. Seven of those chapters are summarised by Spykman (1925:93-212), which remains the most comprehensive resumé available in English. All that can be attempted here is a selective review, a savouring of its leading topics and themes.

#### 1.6.4 The Quantitative Determination of the Group

In this chapter Simmel investigates 'the bearing which the mere number of sociated individuals has upon the(se) forms of social life' (1950:87). Certain forms of sociation can only be realised when the size of the group reaches or falls below a particular number of individuals. Moreover, changes in size can produce developments in group processes simply in consequence of quantitative modifications. Sometimes the quantitative aspects can only be approximated, as in the radicalism of the mass in contrast to the more considered judgements of small groups. Other quantitative aspects can be specified much more precisely, as in the qualitative changes that occur when a dyad becomes a triad (1950:122-138; 145-169). Thus the first substantive chapter of Sociology deals with those aspects of forms of sociation which are most amenable to the geometrical analogy much favoured by Simmel in his programmatic statements.

### 1.6.5 Superordination and Subordination

Virtually every instance of sociation contains elements of super- and subordination and yet, despite the 'immense role' played by these relationships, 'superficial notions about them' (1950:183) are widespread. Chief among these is the situation of the subordinate which is often depicted as one of 'coercion', 'having no choice' and the like. The relationship between the superordinate and the subordinate is not a one-way street: some spontaneity and independence on the subordinate's part is always possible, albeit that the amount of scope for such free action may be very limited in some situations. In an authority relation, the 'co-efficiency' or active participation of the subordinate is often overlooked. The popular view of unilateral influence is misleading. Simmel shows how the relationship between super- and subordinate involves interaction between the parts and reciprocal influence, and is thus a form of sociation.

Three different entities which can exert superordination are identified by Simmel: an individual, a group, and a law or principle. He insists that he is not interested in 'constructing dogmatically one-sided series' (ibid: 194) but rather seeks to explore the varying and sometimes contradictory patterning of these complex relationships. Among the many observations and generalisations made in the course of a lengthy and multifaceted discussion are: subordination to an individual is likely to promote group unification; a group will often be

more objective in the domination it exercises than is an individual (ibid:225); the sociologically relevant aspect of subordination to a principle is the conscience regarded as 'a psychological crystallization of actual social power' (ibid:254). The topic of super- and subordination also permits Simmel to examine degrees of domination and (a favourite issue) freedom, and it is in this context that the schemes advanced by socialism to abolish authority relations are critically examined. Alternating superordination and subordination so that no individual is in a permanently disadvantaged position is seen by Simmel as a method of escaping the degradation inherent in fixed forms of authority relations, although the practical difficulties of the proposal are acknowledged (ibid:288ff).

#### 1.6.6 Conflict

Simmel's chapter is the classical source of the idea that conflict has certain positive aspects or functions as well as the more obvious negative ones. Indeed, the chapter is such a rich and perspicacious resource that the propositions advanced in Lewis A. Coser's celebrated The Functions of Social Conflict (1956), whilst supported by the work of a wide range of authors, are derived solely from Simmel's chapter (Coser 1956:29). Conflict in its many guises is eminently social in character. Unlike indifference, conflict is always conflict between two or more parties. Conflict is a form of sociation, even though its causes are 'dissociating factors' (1955:13) such as hate, envy and greed, since it involves reciprocal action between two or



more parties. For Simmel it is a mistake to regard instances of conflict as 'mere sociological liabilities or negative instances':

'Just as the universe needs "love and hate", that is, attractive and repulsive forces, in order to have any form at all, so society, too, in order to attain a determinate shape, needs some quantitative ratio of harmony and disharmony, of association and competition, of favorable and unfavorable tendencies.' (1955:15)

Conflict and harmony are paired, correlative phenomena that are an inevitable part of social life. Moreover, conflict can be a very positive aspect of sociation for the individual and the group. For the individual, conflict provides a release of tension: 'if we did not even have the power and right to rebel - against tyranny, arbitrariness, moodiness, tactlessness, we could not bear to have any relation to people whose characters we thus suffer' (ibid:19). For the group, conflict can serve to draw people together, uniting them against a common foe. Simmel develops these themes as they appear in a range of spheres of life, including legal conflicts, conflicts over causes, and conflict in intimate relations.

Competition is a distinct type of conflict characterised by its indirectness: two or more parties address their efforts to the attainment of the same prize. Once again, Simmel draws out the positive and negative aspects of the phenomenon: competition on the one hand has a 'socializing and civilizing function', drawing into sociation persons who would remain otherwise unrelated, but it also involves a 'squandering'

of resources and can often result in in 'the tragedy of social elements working against one another' (ibid:62; see also 76).

Finally, Simmel considers the methods through which conflict is terminated: by a change in sentiments resulting in the disappearance of the bone of contention; by victory of one party over another; and by compromise and conciliation. There also remains the possibility of irreconciliability. Simmel in characteristic fashion treats this as a social form evident in two polar types but is also fascinated by their psychological correlates. In the one case, absolute irreconciliability, conflict results in an irrevocable modification of the being of one party. In the other case, limited irreconciliability 'the psychological precipitate of the conflict is... isolated' (p.122) and treated as a localised trouble within the totality of the relationship.

#### 1.6.7 The Secret and the Secret Society

Simmel's analysis of secrecy commences with a broad consideration of the knowledge that people come to possess about one another. We have to know with whom we are dealing, their qualities and their typical tendencies for any kind of sociation to be possible. Our dealings with others are based on fragmentary and imperfect knowledge but which is usually sufficient for sociation to proceed. The reciprocal knowledge required for sociation certainly does not meet the criterion of scientific knowledge (1950:308) but is adequate for our practical purposes:

'... in view of our accidental and defective adaptations to our life conditions, there is no doubt that we preserve and acquire not only so much truth, but also so much ignorance and error, as is appropriate for our practical activities' (1950:310)

Our knowledge of others is imperfect because we do not have direct access to the inner life of other individuals.

Simmel goes on to construct a typology of social relationships based upon the degrees of reciprocal knowledge of the total personalities of participants. Interest groups require very limited and specific kinds of reciprocal knowledge. Acquaintance, friendship, love and marriage make progressively greater demands on the reciprocal knowledge between participants for these types of relationship to succeed. It is within the context of the role of reciprocal knowledge in social life that Simmel presents his discussion of the secret, that<sub>1</sub><sup>is</sup> 'the hiding of realities by negative or positive means' (ibid:330).

Secrecy generates a 'second world' alongside the 'manifest world' and is obviously a form of sociation when two or more individuals are bound together by their secret knowledge. But secrecy can also figure in dyadic relationships where the relationship may be affected by the knowledge held by one individual. Simmel emphasises the moral neutrality of the secret as a form of sociation: admirable as well as reprehensible acts may be kept secret. Secrecy's fascination rests on 'the impressionability of our feelings through differences' (ibid:332), as in the brag of children, "I know something that

you don't", and the associated feeling of superiority. In addition, the secret 'operates as an adorning possession' which adds to the 'value of the personality' (p.337).

Simmel proceeds to dissect the organisational properties of secret societies. The need to protect certain knowledge and practices leads to various measures, such as oaths of silence, being taken. These in turn engender a reciprocal confidence between the secret society's members. Other organisational features discussed include hierarchy, ritual, formality, seclusion, group egoism and de-individualisation. This aspect of Simmel's theory has been formulated in nine testable propositions by Hazelrigg (1968).

#### 1.6.8 The Intersection of Social Circles

Translated in 1955 by Reinhard Bendix as 'The Web of Group Affiliations' this chapter develops ideas first presented in On Social Differentiation. The social differentiation characteristic of modern society widens the range of groups to which the individual may become affiliated (or social circles to which the individual may belong, to retain the more literal translation with its geometrical overtones), creating the circumstances productive of individualism and the differentiation of the individual's personality. In a complex and historically well-informed analysis Simmel dissects the social sources and implications of modern individuality. The individual personality is formed from elements of life which have arisen in society:

'This personality is subjectivity par excellence in the sense that it combines the elements of culture in an individual manner. There is here a reciprocal relation between the subjective and the objective. As the person becomes affiliated with a social group, he surrenders himself to it. A synthesis of such subjective affiliation creates a group in an objective sense. But the person also regains his individuality, because his pattern of participation is unique; hence the fact of multiple group-participation creates in turn a new subjective element. Causal determination of, and purposive action by, the individual appear as two sides of the same coin.' (1955:141)

As multiple group affiliations come to replace identification with a single primary group, they may create uncertainties and moral problems for the individual, but they are just as likely to strengthen the individual because they force an awareness that the individual 'has a core of inner unity' (ibid:142). It is an absence of such an awareness that is found on the part of members of simple societies.

Where the individual's group affiliations are overlapping or juxtaposed rather than concentric (ie where one group encompasses the next, as in nation-class-occupation), a greater part of the personality will be expressed in social life. But this comes at a cost to the individual, for juxtaposed group affiliations can also generate cross-pressures, where the interests of one group-affiliation can conflict with another. Simmel explores the positive and negative aspects of multiple group affiliations in a range of contexts, including the medieval guild, the priesthood, and the situations of wage labourers, employers, the mercantile class and women. His overall theme, however, is that multiple group affiliations both determine and

enrich 'the vitality of the individual as a social being' (ibid:154).

#### 1.6.9 The Poor

Simmel's point of departure is the historically varying conceptions of the rights of the poor and the duties of the non-poor towards the poor. In some places and at some times, the poor do have certain rights to assistance; at others, they have not, but the modern state may assume a duty to provide assistance. The situation of the poor is akin to that of the stranger, for the poor are both inside and outside of society simultaneously: they are excluded from society because of the role they fulfill within society (1965:127). Simmel goes on to argue that poverty is a relative concept (anticipating the views of Townsend, Abel-Smith and others by nearly half a century) and that the poor person cannot be identified simply in terms of deficiencies and deprivations. To be poor in a sociologically relevant sense (and here Simmel anticipates labelling theory) is to be in receipt of assistance as a result of a lack of means. Thus the poor play a 'specific social role' (ibid:138) and what maintains the poor as a social group is not interaction among the membership but 'the collective attitude which society as a whole adopts towards it' (ibid).

The 'Excursus' in this chapter, 'The negative character of collective behaviour' (1950:396-401) pursues the examination of rights, duties and social norms. Simmel argues that larger social groups have to demand more prohibitive and restrictive

social norms than smaller groups, and that in larger group observance of norms says less about the individual than in smaller groups. However, whilst norm-observance in large groups do not give esteem to the individual, any failure to observe certain norms, such as forms of courtesy, unmistakably conveys an absence of esteem: 'greeting someone in the street proves no esteem whatever, but failure to do so, conclusively proves the opposite'(1950:400) (note the anticipation of Sacks' notion of 'noticeable absence'). The forms of courtesy it seems are useful symbols for indicating negative attitudes but largely useless as symbols for conveying anything positive about the individual.

#### 1.6.10 The Self-Preservation of the Social Group

Translated by Albion W. Small as 'The persistence of social groups' (1898:662-698; 829-836; 35-50), Simmel investigates the ways in which groups maintain themselves and continue through time. Groups can remain identical while their memberships change. The self-preservation of the group is a different phenomenon to the self-preservation of the individual, and in fact the latter may be at odds with the former. Although the continuity of the group is apt to engender notions of 'special vital force' residing in group life itself, Simmel warns us against attributing an independent reality to the group and argues instead that the sources of group persistence lie in the 'summation of a collection of separate and manifold fragmentary processes of a social nature' (1898:667). These processes are linked to the group's residence in a permanent locality, the

gradual turnover of group membership, the objectification of group identity in a material symbol, the role of honour within the group, and the vesting of powers pertaining to group unity in certain subsections of the group. Simmel also analyses two broad methods of group preservation: (1) the adoption of rigid and conservative standards to meet any outside threat, a method favoured by large heterogenous groups (ibid:831-832); (2) the adoption of flexible and variable forms, a method favoured by small homogenous groups like gypsies and conspirators who 'must be able, so to speak, to crawl into every hole' (ibid:35). Simmel also returns to some of the ideas presented in his chapter on conflict, suggesting that certain kinds of antagonism can be productive for the self-preservation of the group by making the way for necessary internal changes (1898:46-48).

The excursus on 'Faithfulness and gratitude' (1950:379-395) considers that individuals put into and get out of persisting social relationships. Faithfulness is 'a specific psychic state, which is directed towards the continuance of the relation as such' (1950:381) whereas gratitude 'establishes the bond of interaction, of the reciprocity of service and return service, even when they are not guaranteed by external coercion' (ibid:387). Gratitude is 'the moral memory of mankind' (ibid:388). In an analysis of considerable subtlety Simmel elaborates what he calls the 'inner sociology' of faithfulness and gratitude, demonstrating how they generate an 'atmosphere of obligation [which] belongs to those "microscopic" but infinitely tough threads which tie one element of society to another, and



eventually all of them together in a stable collective life' (ibid:395).

#### 1.6.11 Space and the Spatial Ordering of Society

The chapter on space remains the major untranslated section of Sociology; only the 'Excursus on the stranger' and part of the 'Excursus on the sociology of the senses' are available in English and thus this discussion is heavily indebted to Spykman (1925) and Frisby (1984a). Spatial factors, such as the size of a state, are of no sociological interest when seen in terms of sheer geographical area. It is the sociation occurring between the inhabitants of an area that attracts Simmel's interest. Sociation itself is space-filling: the reciprocal relations between two or more individuals fills and animates the space between them. Some social groups, such as states, have a clear spatial referent (territory) and thus fill out space quantitatively, whilst other groups, such as churches or guilds, are unrelated to spatial factors in their basic principles of organisation but fill space within a society functionally.

Boundaries serve to differentiate one social group from another, whilst at the same time a unity is lent to those within it. A boundary serves the same function as a frame around a picture, divorcing what is enclosed from the wider world and subjecting it to a single set of norms. Boundaries also confine, and thus generate internal pressures. Simmel contrasts the sense of freedom experienced by a crowd in an open space with the tension generated by its confinement to an enclosed space. He

also suggests that the history of Venice, with its expansionist mercantile traditions, is evidence of the influence of a narrow frame on the life of the group. Territorial growth was impossible and thus the expansion of the city required expansion into the wider world.

Simmel also examines the importance of distance and proximity for forms of sociation. A range of issues are explored, including the significance of personal contact in different types of relationship, spatial proximity, centralisation versus local *diffusion and decentralisation*, and the excursus 'The sociology of the senses' (partially translated as Simmel 1969). Although also addressing our senses of smell and hearing, particular attention is given to sight, for of all of humanity's senses 'the eye has a uniquely sociological function' (1969:358).

In a brief discussion Simmel nevertheless makes a number of important points. He considers first the mutual glance, when two persons look at ('into') each other's eyes, as distinct from the simple observation of another person. In the mutual glance, says Simmel, we find 'the most direct and purest reciprocity which exists anywhere'. Each person gives equally to the encounter. 'The eye cannot take unless at the same time it gives... In the same act in which the observer seeks to know the observed, he surrenders himself to be understood by the observed' (1969:358). Naturally enough, glances are transitory phenomena, gone in the moment they occur. But sociation as we know it would

not be possible if human beings did not have the capacity for the mutual glance, since the glance serves as a vehicle for conveying recognition, acknowledgement, understanding, intimacy, shame and so on. Simmel continues: 'the sociological significance of the eye has special reference to the expression of the face as the first object of vision between man and man'. A person's face is a crucial indicator of mood and intent: '...a man is first known by his countenance, not by his acts' (ibid:359). Unlike other parts of the body which serve some useful function, 'the face as a medium of expression is entirely a theoretical organ... it transacts none of the internal or practical relations of the man, it only tells about him' (ibid).

Following from his suggestions about glances and faces, Simmel proposes that the attitude of the blind is different to that of the deaf. 'For the blind, the other person is actually present only in the alternating periods of his utterance.' This gives to the blind, Simmel suggests, 'a peaceful and calm existence' in contrast to the often 'more perplexed, puzzled and worried' (p.360) attitude of the deaf. The visual mode assumes a greater significance in the large city because the person is likely to encounter many more people in a relationship of anonymity, a relationship in which all that is available to him is the appearance of the other. Also, the city presents a range of situations (Simmel mentions public transportation) in which the individual finds himself in the company of anonymous others, others who he can only see and who are not known to him in any other respect than through their appearance. The increased role

of 'mere visual impression' is characteristic of modern, large-scale urban society. Persons in such a society therefore suffer from some of the same perplexity as afflicts the deaf: the increased role of 'mere visual impression' contributes to a widespread sense of estrangement.

The movement of individuals and groups from one location to another is also examined in this chapter. Simmel considers features of the life of nomadic groups and other categories of wanderer, such as the medieval merchant, scholar and artisan. This provides the wider context for Simmel's enormously influential excursus on 'The stranger' (on the misunderstandings and confusions in the reception of this essay, see Levine, 1985:73-88). The stranger is the 'potential wanderer' who has 'not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going' (1950:402). The trader, often in Europe a Jew, is the archetypal stranger. The stranger is involved in a very specific form of sociation: not an accepted member of the group, distant from it, but not so far distant as to be irrelevant to the group. Occupying such a structurally ambiguous position endows the stranger with a widely recognised objectivity which is seen as superior to the interested and partisan views of group members.

The discussion of the spatial relations of social forms concludes with an analysis of the influence of territoriality on social organisation and, with characteristic Simmelian paradox, with an examination of the function of empty space. Borderlands and 'no-man's land' often signify antagonism between contiguous

social groups, but these empty spaces also have positive functions, serving as neutral areas in which trading can be carried out, or where parties in conflict can meet in peace. Empty spaces are neutral in that no-one has an interest in them, but the fact of their existence points to a relation of potential antagonism.

#### 1.6.12 The Enlargement of the Group and the Development of Individuality

The final chapter of Sociology is a reworked version of chapter three of On Social Differentiation {see 1.3 above}. Differences between individuals will increase as the groups to which they belong become larger. Thus the feudal serf who was bound to a narrow social group is less individuated than the modern labourer, who has contacts with a number of larger social groups. Small groups provide little scope for their members individuality. There tends to be a great deal of similarity between group members, although the group itself may be marked by considerable individuality. As the group becomes larger, the individual has more opportunity to express his individual distinctiveness, but the group itself loses its individuality. In the relation between personal and collective individuality it is as if there is 'an unalterable ratio between individual and social factors that changes only its form' (1971:257). Simmel proceeds to illustrate this 'phenomenological formula' (note: not law) in religion and political settings and in the family. He then considers the meanings of individuality. Two meanings are

identified. The eighteenth century conception sought individuality in freeing the person from historical and institutional constraints. Once unfettered and emancipated, the intrinsic goodness of the human personality would be let loose upon the world and humans would use this *freedom* to differentiate themselves, 'to unfold the full diversity of their individual powers' (1971:271-272). The second nineteenth century conception of individualism emphasises not a general human nature that will be unveiled once oppressive constraints are removed, but rather the uniqueness of the person, that which distinguishes and differentiates the person from all others, what it is about the person which separates that person from everyone else (see also Simmel, 1901). The latter conception of individuality is 'the denial of every kind of equality' (1971:286). The discussion also encompasses consideration of the situation of the nobility and the special kind of individuality developed by that group which stands between engulfment by the group and 'oppositional self-centeredness' (ibid:213).

Thus the final chapter of Sociology finds Simmel returning to his favourite theme: individuality. In the final pages of that work he strikes an even more magisterial note, addressing 'The categories of human experience'. Recall that in the first chapter of the book Simmel asked the reader to hold fast to the single methodological viewpoint he was advocating in order to make sense of what was to follow. The final pages complement the relativism of the earlier ones as Simmel reminds us that formal sociology is only one way of contemplating the

contents of human experience. There is much to be gained by regarding life's contents as the product of human interactions, as Sociology amply demonstrates. But there are other ways of observing and studying these contents and Simmel lists three fundamental categories in which human experience may be viewed: objective culture, individual personality and humanity. (1) Objective culture. The contents of life can be viewed simply in their own terms (logical, technical, aesthetic or whatever): 'the inner validity, coherence, and objective significance of all sciences, technologies and arts are completely independent of the fact that they are realized within... social life' (ibid:36). (2) Individual personality. Whatever human experience means to an individual is a further point of view: 'all contents of life are directly borne by individuals. Some one person has conceived them. They fill the consciousness of someone; they bring someone pleasure or pain' (ibid.:37). (3) Humanity. Simmel acknowledges that this may seem a somewhat vacuous category for ordering human experience but insists that it has validity:

'We can... ask of every human condition, quality or action: What does this mean as a stage in the development of humanity? What preconditions must the entire species have attained for this to be possible? What has humanity as a biological, ethical and psychic type thereby won or lost in value?' (ibid.:39)

Simmel acknowledges the 'indisputable indispensability' of the sociological viewpoint for ordering human experience, but argues that from an 'ultimate point of view' humanity and the individual 'remain the polar concepts for the observation of human life' (ibid:40). Perhaps we should not be surprised that Simmel's interests turned away from sociology after 1908.

### 1.7 Is There a Systematic Basis to Simmel's Sociology?

Much depends, of course, on the definition of systematic. It might be suggested that to be systematic, a sociology must display certain of the features of 'system' which in this context can be broadly defined as the methodical arrangement of ideas, principles, methods and procedures and the like. A systematic sociology must therefore present a clearly demarcated subject-matter, a methodical investigative procedure, a principled basis for the selection of topics of investigation and an appropriate framework for presenting findings.

Many of Simmel's contemporaries and later critics were convinced that in this sense there was not a genuinely systematic basis to his sociology. Durkheim was an early and robust critic of Simmel (he apparently regarded Simmel as a competitor in his grand plan to unify scientific knowledge of social phenomena around the Année Sociologique; see Jaworski, 1983). Durkheim presented a range of criticisms of both the programme of formal sociology (Durkheim 1960, 1982) and The Philosophy of Money (Durkheim 1979). Of the latter, Durkheim complained of its eclecticism, its mixing of scientific, philosophical and artistic modes of reasoning which resulted in 'imagination' and 'personal feelings' being given 'free reign' whilst 'rigorous demonstrations have no relevance'. The result is a type of 'speculation bâtarde' (1979:328; cf 1.5.8 above). Of the formal sociology Durkheim was equally damning. The form-content distinction fails to delimit the sphere of the sociological with



adequate clarity. In the end it is the author's 'whim' (1982:192) or 'fancy' (1960:359) which determines how the form-content distinction is to be effected in any given instance. Further, Durkheim argues that:

'No connection can be discovered among the questions to which he draws the attention of sociologists; they are topics of mediation that have no relation to an integral scientific system.' (ibid)

For so enthusiastic an advocate of rigorous methodological procedures as Durkheim, the apparently haphazard way in which Simmel chose *problems for investigation, assembled observations* and presented concepts was bound to give offence (see Levine 1985:89-95 for further discussion of Durkheim's treatment of Simmel's ideas).

Weber was also critical of Simmel, maintaining that 'certain crucial aspects of his methodology are unacceptable', but he was not as unequivocally condemnatory as Durkheim. Thus, Weber could describe some of Simmel's analyses as 'simply brilliant' and suggested that 'Simmel, even when he is on the wrong path, fully deserves his reputation as one of the foremost thinkers, a first-rate stimulator of academic youth and academic colleagues' (1972:158). Weber's recognition of the 'highly contradictory' (ibid) character of his evaluation of Simmel is perhaps typical of critical response which has on the one hand recognised the ingenuity of his analyses whilst on the other has queried the generalisability of the procedures which have given rise to these analyses; here it is complained that too much seems

to rest simply on the 'brilliance' of Simmel's 'insights'. The latter tendency has exasperated some critics, perhaps none more vituperative than Sorokin who complains of the 'purely speculative character' of Simmel's sociology in the following uncompromising terms:

'From a purely methodological standpoint, Simmel's sociological method lacks scientific method... In vain one would look in his work for a systematic method like that of the Le Play school... or even a simple, careful and attentive study of the facts he is talking about. All this is lacking. What there is represents only the speculative generalisation of a talented man, backed by the "method of illustration" in the form of two or three facts incidentally taken and often one-sidedly interpreted. Without Simmel's talent the same stuff would appear poor. Simmel's talent saves the situation, but only as far as talent compensates for lack of scientific methodology... to call sociologists "back to Simmel"... means to call them back to a pure speculation, metaphysics and a lack of scientific method.' (1928:502 n.26)

An insufficient systematicity is also invoked as a criticism by a relatively sympathetic commentator such as von Weyse:

'Nevertheless, Simmel's investigations ran the danger of being choked up with worthless detail, of being desultory and disordered... From his numerous theories of the manifold forms of sociation there has arisen no unifying theory of sociation and its forms.' (von Wiese & Becker, 1932:708)

Von Wiese, in endeavouring to round out and complete Simmel's project, gives us some indication of what a truly systematic formal sociology looks like. He lists some 650 different forms of sociation in his 'Frame of reference for the systematics of action patterns' (see *ibid*:717-730).

As will be evident from the foregoing review of some of the manifestations of the 'lack of systematicity' criticism, a proper reply requires an examination of the methodology of formal sociology; this is attempted in chapters four and five. Simmel himself recognised that the systematic properties of his analyses stemmed primarily from the formal method. As noted above (1.6.1) Simmel prefaced his Sociology by asking readers to hold fast to his chosen way of approaching sociology's subject matter. He clearly saw the formal method as the guiding thread of his sociology. He also sought to emphasise the provisional character of his investigations and requested that critics not take this insistence as a 'cheap' defence, since his was only the beginning of an infinitely long road' and thus 'the pretension to any systematic and definitive completeness' would be 'illusory' (1959a:336).

Leave to one side then, the methodological questions. Leave also to one side one of two major works in which Simmel's sociological reputation rests, The Philosophy of Money. Whilst the organisation of parts, chapters and sections of The Philosophy of Money has a sparsely Kantian look to it, we have seen how Simmel exploits the scope of 'philosophy' as he understood it to address a wide range of issues, not exclusively restricted to formal sociology. Consider only his magnum opus in formal sociology, Sociology, in the light of the question, does it possess any basis of internal consistency other than the treatment of topics by the formal viewpoint?

Simmel's own disclaimers may lead to the impression that Sociology is little more than a collection of unconnected, relatively discrete essays united only by a single methodological viewpoint. But if this book was merely a series of exemplifications of the formal method, then why did Simmel choose to exclude certain quite recent writings, such as 'The metropolis and mental life' (1903) and 'Fashion' (1904) and yet include only moderately reworked versions of two chapters which had originally appeared as far back as 1890 (in On Social Differentiation)? It looks as though Simmel's selection of material for inclusion in Sociology was guided by certain criteria, even if Simmel himself was not entirely clear what they were, or elected not to make them explicit.

Renate Mayntz suggests that the internal coherence of Sociology is to be found in Simmel's choice of forms of sociation which illustrate certain 'very general, abstract principles' such as super- and subordination, conflict, the quantitative dimension, the principles of spatial structuring (1968:256). These principles are evident in Simmel's chapter headings but others are implied in his writings, according to Mayntz, such as the dependence-autonomy dimension which looms large in his analyses of group membership and individuality. Throughout Sociology Simmel is primarily interested in analysing the 'objective meanings' of the forms. In those chapters which explore a specific type of group (eg the secret society) or a social type (eg the poor, the aristocracy, the stranger) Simmel shows how the objective meaning of these forms is determined by 'a unique

FIGURE 1

THE THEMATIC COHERENCE OF SIMMEL'S 'SOCIOLOGY'

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>THEME</u>
I THE PROBLEM OF SOCIOLOGY	The cognitive presuppositions required for society to be possible
II THE QUANTITATIVE DETERMINATION OF THE GROUP	The horizontal morphology of the group
III SUPER- AND SUBORDINATION	The vertical morphology of the group
IV CONFLICT	Dynamics of individual and group relations in their 'external' aspect
V THE SECRET AND THE SECRET SOCIETY	Dynamics of individual and group relations in their 'internal' aspect
VI THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL CIRCLES	Consequences of individual's affiliations to social groups
VII THE POOR	Consequences of individual's exclusion from social groups
VIII THE SELF-PRESERVATION OF THE SOCIAL GROUP	The maintenance of the group through time
IX SPACE AND THE SPATIAL ORDERING OF SOCIETY	The maintenance of the group in space
X THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE GROUP AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALITY	The social preconditions for the construction of individuality

constellation' of structural principles. Thus Mayntz concludes that '...Soziologie, often criticised for being an unsystematic collection of substantive analyses only vaguely connected with the formal approach, really does possess a surprising - if partially implicit - internal coherence' (1968:257).

Frisby (1984:118-120) suggests some related bases of thematic coherence in Sociology. Figure 1 is an attempt to adapt and develop some of Frisby's suggestions.

This schema proposes that Sociology is organised into four structuring principles, operating at a higher level than those discussed by Mayntz, concerning group morphology, group dynamics, participation/exclusion from the group and group maintenance. Using these principles reveals a pairing of chapters within Sociology. The first and last chapters can also be paired in this manner. Both chapters deal with the nature of the individual - society relationship - to be sure, a central and abiding theme of Simmel's which recurs through each chapter in Sociology - but the first and last chapters examine the theme at a higher level of generality. The focus of the first chapter is the construction of society out of forms of sociation and the cognitive predispositions resident in individuals; that of the last is the individual and individuality as a social product.

What this schema is designed to show is that there are some latent principles of organisation evident in Sociology; that the selection of topics is not arbitrary but does appear to be guided by an effort to articulate a limited set of themes.

Simmel may well have been anathema to the kind of systematisation offered by von Wiese, not least because of his fascination with the multifaceted nature of social reality and life itself. This fascination is evident throughout his writings, and a glimpse of one tendency he regarded as standing in opposition to it is given in the discussion of the organisational principles of the secret society:

'All system-building, whether of science, conduct or society, involves the assertion of power; it subjects material outside of thought to a form which thought has cast.' (1950:357)

In this respect Simmel's approach may be considered anti-systematic. However, to arrive at extreme conclusions about the disorderliness of his approach and the content of his publications - infuriatingly difficult as it sometimes is to follow the thread of his arguments - is surely a mistake.

#### 1.8 'Basic Questions of Sociology' and Simmel's Last Works

After 1908 Simmel's interests began to turn away from sociology. He taught courses in sociology on only four subsequent occasions: the winter semesters of 1909-1910, 1911-1912, 1914-1915, and 1917-1918 (Gassen, 1958:348-349). His position at the University of Berlin was still honorary and his applications for posts commensurate with his academic standing unsuccessful. During 1908-1909 there was a protracted effort to appoint Simmel to the second chair in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg; a number of academic luminaries,

including Weber, laboured long and hard on Simmel's behalf but to no avail (see Landmann, 1958: 25-29, especially the notorious Schaefer letter, and Honigsheim, 1958). Although Simmel's interest in sociology waned after 1908, he was instrumental in the establishment of the German Sociological Society. The recognition of what he had accomplished in promoting sociology as an independent academic discipline was such that Weber and others pressed him to become the first President of the association, a move he resisted. At the first meeting of the Society, in Frankfurt in October 1910, Simmel gave the welcoming address entitled, appropriately enough, 'The sociology of sociability' (Simmel, 1949).

Sociability distils 'out of the realities of social life the pure essence of association, of the associative process as a value and a satisfaction' (1949:255). Sociability extracts the serious substance of life leaving only 'togetherness', the sheer pleasure of the company of others; as such it is the 'play-form of association' (ibid). What binds the individual to others in sociability is 'nothing but the capacities, attractions and interests of pure humanity' (ibid:256). Simmel speaks of a 'sociability threshold' which has upper and lower limits. On the one hand, during sociability the individual is required to hold at bay objective differences of status, knowledgeability, skill and so on. On the other hand the individual must not allow personal moods and fates, 'the light and shadow of one's inner life' to enter into sociable dealings with others. Sociability thus generates an artificial but democratic world in which 'the



pleasure of the individual is always contingent upon the joy of others' (ibid:257). Freed of connection with the serious contents of life, sociability is truly a 'social game', an end in itself.

Among the aspects of this social game which attract Simmel's attention are coquetry and conversation. The flirtatious behaviour of the coquette leaves behind 'the reality of erotic desire, of consent and demand' (ibid:258) which are playfully alluded to rather than actually manifested. Similarly conversation, 'that most extensive instrument of all human common life' (ibid:259) becomes an end in itself, undertaken simply for the sake of the sociable opportunity it provides.

Simmel's analysis ends on a dual note with the assertion of an antinomy of a kind that befits a thinker heavily influenced by Kant and wishing to extend that mode of reasoning into the sociological domain. Sociability is not only an artificial world cut off from the weighty matters of life; it is a superficial world, a 'flight from life' (ibid:261). But it is nevertheless a very attractive world even to the serious and the thoughtful, for in it 'we construct and experience the meaning and the forces of [life's] deepest reality but without the reality itself' (ibid).

By 1912 Simmel was acknowledging that a major shift in his intellectual interests was taking place. In a letter of that year to Marianne Weber he spoke of his recently-published book on Goethe as marking 'the end of an epoch, a last employment of the

world of conceptions that has sufficed for me until today'.

Simmel continued:

'I am now setting my sails anew and setting out for an unknown land. Only too likely, the voyage will come to an end before I reach the coast. At least what happens to so many of my friends shall not happen to me: settling down comfortable and snug on the ship itself, so that in the end they believe the ship itself is the new country.' (1959e: 241-242)

Although the d<sup>e</sup>stinction was uncertain, the departure points were clear and in 1913 Simmel withdrew from the German Sociological Society, explaining in his letter of resignation how 'my interests and the direction of my work have turned so completely toward pure philosophy and have alienated me from sociology with a radicalism that has surprised even me, that my remaining in a leading position of the Society seems inwardly dishonest' (quoted in Scaff, 1988:20). The 'unknown land' Simmel was now headed towards concerned the articulation of a Lebensphilosophie which found its fullest expression in the book he worked on in the final months of his life, Lebensanschauung (1918). But before that project was completed Simmel was to publish one final small volume in sociology.

In the spring of 1914 Simmel moved to Strasbourg, at long last having obtained a salaried professorial post. He taught sociology only twice at Strasbourg. His intellectual interests were now firmly fixed on the development of his Lebensphilosophie, but he published a s<sup>h</sup>ort book, Basic Questions of Sociology in 1917 (translated in its entirety as Wolff,

1950:1-84). It largely consists of a more accessible version of some of the key ideas of Sociology. What is new is the identification of two further 'problem areas of sociology', 'general sociology', 'philosophical sociology', and certain modifications to the 1910 address on sociability which emphasise the idea of social forms becoming autonomous of their content.

General sociology encompasses questions about the overall development of society, the conditions of group power and so forth; it addresses the social determination of human life. It very much appears that general sociology is closely similar to the concept of sociology as a general social science which Simmel had for so long criticised in his efforts to establish formal sociology as a special social science. If Simmel's 1917 position displays greater equanimity or catholicity about the legitimate scope of sociological inquiries, then that is possibly an indicator of the relativism or perspectivism that was becoming steadily more pronounced in the last decade of his life. In terms echoing the final paragraphs of Sociology he writes in Basic Questions that art, politics, law, medicine, philosophy - and presumably also different types of sociology - 'all these analyses and structuralizations of our immediate life and creativity experience this life as a unity. They lie on the same plane and have the same right to be heard' (1950:18). Simmel is seeking to guard against any sociologism which asserts that the social is the only adequate way of comprehending human existence; all modes of cognition are limited 'in front of the totality of human existence' (ibid).

Philosophical sociology, foreshadowed in the 1908 version of 'The problem of sociology', addresses epistemological and metaphysical aspects of society. It is just these aspects of society which Simmel is always all too ready to discuss, as is especially evident in The Philosophy of Money. What the tripartite view of sociology represents is a late attempt by Simmel to clarify the borders of his formal sociology. Although Simmel does not retrospectively recategorise his writings, it could be proposed that On Social Differentiation exemplifies general sociology, The Philosophy of Money is an admixture of general, formal and philosophical sociology (not to mention cultural criticism and Lebensphilosophie), whilst only Sociology is predominantly conducted under the auspices of formal sociology.

At the outset of the 1917 version of the sociability paper Simmel discusses the general process of the 'autonomization of contents'. Forms such as science, art, law, even play are originally rooted in the practical realities of life and are fuelled by these contents. But they may become separate from these contents, as when science or art become valued for their own sake. The practical impulses that gave rise to the forms are forgotten, and the forms 'become the purpose and material of their own existence' (1950:43). Sociability is one such autonomous form. The upper and lower sociability thresholds ensure that practical realities are held in abeyance and thus what transpires on sociable occasions 'exists for its own sake

and for the sake of the fascination which, in its liberation from these ties, it diffuses' (ibid).

Sociability, seen as an autonomous 'play-form' of sociation which determines the contents of sociation rather than being determined by them, may seem a relatively insignificant and unimportant phenomenon, but the general process Simmel articulates has much more serious consequences in other spheres of social life. In the 1911 essay 'On the concept and tragedy of culture' (1968:27-46) Simmel adds a darker, more pessimistic gloss to The Philosophy of Money's analysis of the widening gap between objective and subjective culture. There is little hope of closing the gap: it is now seen as an inevitable concomitant of social development, and the tragedy of culture is that 'objects, in their development, have a logic of their own - not a conceptual one, nor a natural one, but purely as cultural works of man; bound by their own laws, they turn away from the direction by which they could join the personal development of human souls' (ibid:43). There is no escape from the tragedy of culture, which Simmel sees as an immanent logic that dictates the ultimate fate of humanity.

The pivot around which Simmel's Lebensphilosophie turns is the 'dialectic' between on the one hand form as engendered by practical realities and the dynamic energies of life, and on the other the tendency for forms to become autonomous and dominate the expression of those realities and energies (see Weingartner, 1962:69-84). More generally human life is conceived as a

dialectical process between 'more-life' and 'more-than-life'. Life is partly defined by Simmel as a process, as something which is continuously changing and thus producing more of itself; life is thus 'more life'. But life also produces objects which have some stability and determinateness, in other words, forms. Science, history, art as well as social institutions and cultural practices are examples of such forms which are 'more-than-life'. They have their origins in human experience and activity, and yet can come to rule that experience and activity. Life creates and manifests itself in particular forms, yet 'life is always in a latent opposition to the form' (Simmel, 1968:12). In the essay of 1918, 'The conflict in modern culture' (1968:11-26) Simmel reviews the (then) contemporary manifestations of the antagonism between life and form in art (impressionism, expressionism), philosophy (pragmatism) and social life (the situation of youth, the "new morality"). The conflict between life and form is particularly sharply revealed in modern society, but rests ultimately on an antinomy that is universal to civilisation: 'life can express itself and realize its freedom only through forms; yet forms must also necessarily suffocate life and obstruct freedom' (1968:24). Simmel's return to philosophy in his last years contains a deep pessimism for the future in which forms will increasingly suppress life's energies and the essential human desire for freedom.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOFFMAN'S SOCIOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the main directions taken by Goffman's sociological writings. Just as the previous chapter attempted in respect of Simmel, this chapter sets out to sketch the main lineaments of Goffman's thought, providing a backdrop for the more detailed discussions contained in the following chapters. Goffman's earlier, less well-known writings are given more extensive coverage than his later, better-known works. The continuities between the earlier and later writings are emphasised and as in the chapter on Simmel the aim is to display the overall unity of Goffman's sociology.

Erving Manual Goffman was born on 11 June 1922 in Mannville, Alberta, the son of Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine (unless otherwise indicated, the source of biographical information is Winkin, 1988). He attended St. John's Technical High School, a progressive school in Winnipeg from 1936, and went on to the University of Manitoba (also Winnipeg) in September 1939, majoring in chemistry. The period of his studentship was from 1939 to 1942; however, Goffman did not take a degree from the University of Manitoba. In the Arts and Science Junior Division he successfully completed two courses each in English, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry as well as a course in Political Economy. In the Senior Division he completed courses in Chemistry (in 1941) and Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology (in 1942) (Santoro, 1983). There is some mystery about Goffman's

whereabouts and activities between 1942 and 1944. In 1943, according to Winkin (1988:18-21), Goffman was in Ottawa working for the National Film Board (then directed by John Grierson) making documentaries and propaganda films. Winkin (1988:21) maintains that in the summer of 1944 it was Dennis Wrong, a colleague at the National Film Board and recent sociology graduate of the University of Toronto, who recommended his alma mater to Goffman and urged him to restart his studies. But according to the University of Toronto's records, Goffman entered the University as a 3rd year arts student in 1944 and was registered full-time in the 1943-44 session, but only registered as an occasional student in 1944-45 (Averill, 1983). There may be no contradiction here: Goffman may have registered as a full time student very late in the 1943-44 session. It is also worth noting that Goffman did not graduate with the main body of students in the summer of 1945, but obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in the fall convocation (Winkin 1988:25 incorrectly states that Goffman graduated in June 1945; in fact the date of his graduation was 16 November 1945; see University of Toronto, 1945).

What is clear is that even before completing his first degree Goffman had worked in an environment in which the construction of (filmic) images of everyday life was a primary concern. According to Winkin (1988:20-21), the work with the National Film Board was an early and significant influence on Goffman's developing intellectual outlook, familiarising him with the decomposition of ordinary life into its elements which were



then reconstructed into the reality depicted on film and providing one source of the basic ideas that were to inform his magnum opus, Frame Analysis.

At the University of Toronto Goffman took courses in sociology. Perhaps his two most influential teachers were C.W.M. Hart and Ray Birdwhistell. Hart, an Australian, had been taught by Radcliffe-Brown at the University of Sydney in the late 1920s. Best known for his study of the Tiwi of North Australia (see, eg, Hart 1970), Hart had thoroughly absorbed the Durkheimian perspective and it was from him that Goffman obtained initial exposure to what was to be a major and lasting influence on his thought. Hart's broad assumptions about the nature and possibilities of sociology around the time he was teaching Goffman are given in a paper entitled 'Some obstacles to a scientific sociology' (Hart, 1940) which bears the strong imprint of Durkheim's belief that scientific knowledge of society is unquestionably superior to the layman's conceptions. In a word, for Hart the chief obstacle to a scientific sociology is commonsense belief. Hart concludes:

'Sociology has to be observational - man prefers to be intuitive. Sociology has to generalize - man prefers to particularize. Sociology wants to compare - man finds contrast much more interesting. The sociologist searches for mechanical sequences - man firmly believes in witches, whether he calls them witches or wills or reason or instincts or impulses, they are always little machines inside himself which prompt him what to do. Sociologists see men as pretty much alike - man is firmly convinced of his own uniqueness. Sociologists want to know how society works before tinkering with the machinery - man loves tinkering with things he does not understand.' (1940:52)

The Durkheimian influence was also mediated, in slightly more attenuated form, by Ray Birdwhistell. Trained by Lloyd Warner at Chicago, Birdwhistell was also close intellectually to Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (cf. Bateson and Mead, 1942). At the time when he taught Goffman he had already begun his immensely detailed investigations of body-motion and gesture (see Birdwhistell, 1952 and 1971). Speaking in 1980, Goffman recalled how he had been most impressed by Birdwhistell's project, although he had reservations about Birdwhistell's attempts to insert elements of his analysis into the Bateson and Mead 'culture and personality' tradition and Warner's class analysis (see Winkin, 1984:85).

## 2.2 Early Works: The Emergence of Goffman's Sociological Perspective

However appropriate or inappropriate Goffman considered Birdwhistell's efforts to integrate his analyses with those of Bateson and Mead and Warner, it appears that Goffman was very impressed by their work. The stamp of Bateson, Mead and Warner is seen in the first dissertation topic Goffman registered after enrolling as a graduate student at the University of Chicago in Autumn 1945. Goffman initially hoped to investigate the relation between personality and socio-economic status, using the Thematic Apperception Test to measure personality and Warner's operationalisation of status. (Warner in fact acted as Goffman's Master's dissertation supervisor and also assumed that role in his doctoral research.) However, the initial expectation could

not be realised and a large portion of his dissertation is given over to explaining the reasons why, thereby providing the grounds necessary to comprehend its singular and elliptical title, Some Characteristics of Response to Depicted Experience (1949).

Goffman's research was originally conceived as an adjunct to Warner and Henry's project on 'Big Sister', a daytime radio serial (Warner & Henry, 1948) which began in 1945. In their study Warner and Henry used the TAT to collect data from wives of skilled to white-collar workers. Goffman's aim was to extend this research by focussing on a sample of wives of professional and managerial workers. Thus, in the autumn of 1946, he interviewed 50 women in the prestigious Hyde Park district of Chicago using the TAT, obtaining usable data from 47 of them.

The dissertation is a very carefully constructed and densely written piece which sets out the reasons why the original objective could not be attained and presents a more restricted analysis of the data obtained. As such the detail of the study will not be reproduced here. Instead, a summary of its main conclusions is presented, with emphasis given to those elements which anticipate Goffman's later ideas and which suggest the general direction taken by his line of thought (see also Winkin, 1988:43-50).

The TAT was invented by the Harvard psychologist Henry A. Murray in 1935 and fast became popular in psychological, sociological and anthropological circles. A subject is shown a

series of deliberately ambiguous pictures and is invited to construct a story around each one. The principle of projection which undergirds the TAT suggests that the stories will reveal facets of the subject's past experiences and present wants; that conscious and unconscious sentiments and needs will be built into the subject's response. Murray believed that the TAT could provide 'an X-ray picture of his inner self' (Murray, 1943:1). The responses of the subject could be interpreted in the light of the psychological categories established in the research literature. Murray's own preference was for Freud's categories. The TAT was the source of the personality variable in Goffman's original design. Socio-economic status was defined, following Warner, in terms of occupation, source of income, education, house type and area of residence (Goffman, 1949:2). Goffman planned to investigate the relation between socio-economic status and personality 'in accordance with the standards of scientific research' (*ibid*), *i.e. in strict adherence to the principles of experimental logic*. In the event, Goffman's study (and by implication others modelled on it) cannot meet these demands.

Goffman begins by outlining his reservations about the use of Murray's technique. Responses to the TAT are to be classified by the investigator into 'simple' and 'complex themas', but Goffman argues that in practice this is a largely arbitrary and equivocal procedure; numerous ways of grouping the subject's talk about a picture into distinct themas are possible. Sometimes the subject's response to a picture is so sparse that comparison, let alone statistical testing is impossible.

Furthermore, linking responses to personality traits such as the Freudian categories (condensation, displacement, substitution, repression, reaction-formation and the like) proves to be an arbitrary or at best circular procedure in which one part of the subject's response is drawn upon to validate another part. Psychological interpretation of the subject's response is likely to proceed, Goffman suggests, in terms of 'current beliefs about human nature' including 'a strong cultural value' namely, 'the belief that each subject has an overall pattern of behavior and personality, and that a key list of traits and events can be found which determine it' (1949:16). (In passing it is worth noting that Goffman's treatment of this cultural value - and a fundamental assumption of personality psychology - as simply a 'belief' echoes Hart's argument in the paper cited earlier that 'the free conscious individual, master of his fate and captain of his soul' is also merely a cultural 'belief'. See Hart, 1940:42-44.) Finally, Goffman queries Murray's assumption that the TAT is revelatory of the 'inner man'. Goffman suggests that only a portion of the inner man is revealed and it is that portion of his psychology which is 'uniquely associated with the act of make-believe' (1949:18). The content of subjects' response tend to follow thoroughly conventional formulas of a broadly romantic and dramatic kind about love, death and success. Moreover, the reason for the repression of these fantasies from everyday life is not so much because of their psychological significance for the individual but because 'real life cannot burden itself with concerns that are so unimportant, trivial,

absurd and frivolous' (ibid). In view of these limitations Goffman's conclusion is that the TAT cannot be used as 'a self-sufficient instrument in systematic research' (ibid:19). These limitations also signal the abandonment of the explicitly psychological frame of reference (ibid:3) of his original research plan.

The same persistently critical line of questioning is evident in the discussion of the limitations of Goffman's sample of Hyde Park wives. Bias arose as a result of Goffman's use of the 'snowballing' technique to build up the sample. Apparently the wives of Hyde Park professionals would only volunteer to be tested if recommended by a personal friend, but such a rolling sample creates bias since the sample is in some sense a social network. Goffman also considers that the test conditions for the Hyde Park subjects were not held constant as *experimental logic* dictates. Part of the reason for this is linked to the use of the TAT which deliberately exploits ambiguous images and thus makes for some ambiguity in the test situation. Goffman also points to what he calls 'universe problems' (ibid:35ff). When a predetermined variable like socio-economic status is used it can sometimes be discovered in the actual course of the research that differences within the status are possibly more significant than differences between statuses. In this connection Goffman (ibid:46) suggests that attendance at a private women's college (by 22 of his 47 subjects) may have introduced an important dimension of stratification not envisaged by the

operationalisation of socio-economic status adopted in his study.

Notice that Goffman is not engaged in a wholesale critique of positivistic research methods and analytical traditions, but rather presents carefully-formulated criticisms of his research methods in the light of his original objectives. Goffman shows how, adjudged in terms of its own criteria, the experimental logic of variable analysis cannot succeed. These discussions also show that Goffman's later (see especially the 'Preface' of Relations in Public, 1971), sharply critical comments on experimental logic and variable analysis were not made in the abstract but have their source in Goffman's own experience of the deficiencies he describes.

In the light of these limitations Goffman reformulates his research problem. He abandons variable analysis in favour of the 'more modest aim' (ibid:38) of classifying elements of the responses of his Hyde Park subjects. Goffman argues that psychologists who have used the TAT have fixed upon that minor part of the subject's response which conveys the unique and the personal and have overlooked the major part of the response which is stereotypical and conventional in character. The research problem now becomes the identification of the characteristics or elements of the Hyde Park subjects responses to the experiences depicted on TAT cards. Let us briefly review his analysis before discussing the assumptions underlying that analysis.

Goffman begins by distinguishing the various disclaimers and disavows that serve as preliminaries to doing the test ("I'm not really very good at this sort of thing" etc) from the test responses proper which accept the task of making believe as the central object of attention. Within the latter two types of response, 'direct' and 'indirect', are identified. In the direct response the subject responds to the picture on the test card as if it was a real event. Under 'indirect response' Goffman considers 'all statements which manage by some means or other to avoid the obligation of assuming the momentary "reality" of the representations' (ibid:47).

'Identification' and 'turning points' are the two elements of the direct response analysed by Goffman. Identification simply involves formulating a description of a pictured character as, for example, 'this is a young boy and a violin'. Turning points involve the description of pictured events as exemplifying some abrupt alteration in life activities and circumstances (ibid:48-56). Goffman's analysis is sensitive to the property of response he calls 'organizational similarity' (ibid:56).

The chapter on 'indirect response' anticipates themes Goffman was later to make famous as 'role distance' (1961) Goffman suggests three ways in which a direct response is avoided under the headings, sympathy, content and representation. Hyde Park subjects would sometimes refuse to communicate the sympathy conventionally demanded by a picture; or their response would



refuse to engage the manifest content of the picture; or the pictures would be interpreted as aesthetic objects. These are methods of denying the reality of the experience depicted on the TAT card. Apart from foreshadowing role distance, it is also easy to read this chapter as an anticipation of a central theme of Frame Analysis (1974), namely how an experience can be sensed as 'real'.

The classificatory analysis of characteristics of response to the interpersonal experience shown on TAT cards is Goffman's alternative to the variable analysis of personality and socio-economic status conducted 'in accordance with the standards of scientific research' (1949:2). What are the assumptions informing this analysis and the notion of projection it embodies?

Early in the dissertation there is a short discussion of approaches to thematic apperception alternative to Murray's. Included is the 'formal' approach which concentrates on the manner or style in which a given response is formulated, irrespective of its content, and the 'linguistic' approach, which treats the formulation of an imagined experience as an object of study in its own right (ibid:20-22). The version of projection informing Goffman's analysis draws upon these two approaches (ibid:23,44) and rests upon the following assumptions:

'... discourse by the members of any particular social group contains habits of thought which are uniquely characteristic of that group. This is based on a truism: the order and pattern into which events fall comes not only from the events but also from the observer. Presumably the plethora of possible worlds is reduced to an order that is consistent with the

social life of the group. The possibility of creating this order is presumably based on the process of abstraction, whereby an aspect of an event is used as a screening device for sorting out the whole event. By emphasizing some differences and neglecting others, a large number of different events can be handled by a relatively small number of concepts...

It is assumed, then, that meaning is injected into the world in accordance with rules observed by members of a group for selecting, classifying and organizing aspects of events. It is also assumed that these rules are somewhat arbitrary from the point of view of the hypothetical external world. Therefore these rules constitute a form of projection, and it is in this sense that the term is used in this study.' (1949:42)

This notion of projection figures in the current work of several disciplines: among others Goffman cites Whorf and Sapir in linguistics; Sanford and Newman in psychology; Empson and Burke in literary criticism; Cassirer in the philosophy of science. Goffman continues:

'From all these points of view the same thing is seen; namely, that situations are regularly perceived in different ways by different individuals and groups, and that each of these regularities can be broken down by analysis into constituent premises or modes of thought.' (1949:43-44)

That, then, is the broad framework in which Goffman's analysis of the features of direct and indirect response can be located. Moreover, Goffman is aware of the differences between his classificatory analysis and the 'scientific' model of testing customarily associated with the TAT:

'The sum of the response units does not exhaust the content of the response, nor does the sum of categories provide a complete and rounded expression of any particular point of view. Therefore, there is no

assurance that kinds of facts have not been neglected which are inconsistent with the overall results of analysis.' (1949:44-45)

In a very different context, this comment echoes remarks of Simmel about the form-content distinction (see below, chapter 4).

To sum up Goffman's view of projection: whilst psychologists have tended to concentrate on the content of responses to TAT cards in order to arrive at conclusions about the overall personality of an individual, Goffman focuses upon the manner in which a response is expressed in order to analyse features of the habits of thought of a particular social group. The product is a broadly formal sociological analysis of the subjects responses which fixes upon the shared ways of organising and experiencing TAT pictures.

In most respects, *the dissertation is now complete*. Goffman has presented a research problem, provided reasons why it was not considered viable, reformulated the research problem and presented the analysis and an account of its underlying assumptions. But Goffman's dissertation does not end there. There is a further chapter which takes up the theme of the analysis of the indirect response, 'the attitude of subjects towards norms' (ibid:66) as evidenced in living room furnishings.

At the end of the discussion of the indirect response Goffman gives clear indication of his disquiet about aspects of the subjects response. In an early example of his understated censoriousness towards the arrangements he describes, Goffman

suggests that 'the appetite of HP subjects for vicarious experience is somewhat jaded: they treat lightly what was meant to be treated seriously; they treat in many ways what was meant to be treated in one way'. But there is also a larger moral to be drawn from this small sample:

'Perhaps the tendency to treat depicted drama lightly will lead to a similar treatment of actual drama - one's aim or that of others. Or perhaps the mistreatment of depicted interpersonal events is merely an expression of how actual interpersonal events are treated or are coming to be treated.' (1949:65)

Goffman used the occasion of interviewing the wives in their own homes to gather data on living room furnishings. He suggests that a 'pattern of disengagement' analogous to the implication of the indirect response is evident in the conscious attempt to disrupt the conventional 'sacred' definition of the living room by combining eighteenth century and modern furniture, by the use of bright wall paint, by the visible presence of items of utility such as typewriters and filing cabinets. Already, in 1949, recognisably 'Goffmanesque' observations are to be found:

'In many living rooms the ritual of order and cleanliness was nicely violated by the permitted presence of a dog, a child, a huge toy, or a fireplace - basket of coal or wood... subjects frequently admitted that they knew nothing about furniture, and in some cases this seemed to be an honest statement of fact.' (1949:69)

Departures from conventional definitions of living room furnishing were also matched by departures from the standard conventions of interpersonal conduct:

'...subjects seemed to make a point of carefully violating, once or twice, the traditional proprieties of conversation; this involved conspicuous use of colloquialisms, direct references to sex, and polite use of impolite profanities... sometimes HP subjects disposed their body and limbs in a way that did not convey the maximum of restraint; this involved wide gestures of hand and arm, standing poses of several kinds, and conspicuously comfortable sitting positions. These movements seemed to be a sign that the subject was in control of her inhibitions, rather than a sign that impulses were in control of the subject.' (ibid:70)

Upper middle class cosmopolitanism is at first gently spoofed, then attacked more sharply. The 'sophistication' of the Hyde Park wives resides in a 'willingness to handle a depicted experience in different ways, and an unwillingness to handle it in the customary way' (ibid:76). These subjects' unwillingness to be completely bound by certain norms, their 'sophistication', does seem to worry the Goffman of 1949 who views it in the end as part of 'a general trend towards the corruption of singlemindedness' (ibid:77).

The significance of Some Characteristics of Response to Depicted Experience is twofold. First of all, Goffman establishes an interest in a social notion of projection, a version of which will figure in his doctorate as the idea that self is 'projected' in ordinary interaction and which becomes a little later the famous conception of self presentation. A much later and somewhat more attenuated link is to the core ideas of Frame Analysis. Secondly, the Masters dissertation marks parting of company with variable analysis. Henceforth his sociology assumes an exclusively classificatory character. This can be

seen in the paper 'Symbols of class status' (1951), a version of which was presented at the annual meeting of the University of Chicago Society for Social Research in 1949, the same year the dissertation was completed.

Goffman conceives of status in broad terms as 'the set of rights and obligations which governs the behaviour of persons acting in a given social capacity' (1951:294). A symbol of status is the means of displaying the person's status in 'ordinary communication'; status symbols are thus 'the cues which select for a person the status that is to be imputed to him and the way in which others are to treat him' (ibid). Unlike collective symbols which draw persons together irrespective of their differences into a 'single moral community', status symbols serve to 'visibly divide the social world into categories of persons... helping to maintain solidarity within a category and hostility between different categories' (ibid). In the framework of the Masters dissertation, we might say that status symbols are a socially natural form of projection which indicate the person's status in the public realm of ordinary communication.

The problem which fascinates Goffman in this paper is the possibility of the fraudulent use of symbols to signify a status the person does not actually possess. He writes: 'this paper is concerned with the pressures that play upon behaviour as a result of the fact that a symbol of status is not always a very good test of status' (ibid:295). In particular Goffman is interested in one sub-set of status symbols, namely class symbols.

Following Warner (who Goffman acknowledges as providing 'direction' for the study) class is conceptualised in multidimensional terms as referring to 'discrete or discontinuous levels of prestige and privilege, where admission to any one of these levels is, typically, determined by a complex of social qualifications, no one or two of which are necessarily essential' (ibid:296). Goffman plainly sees this as a catholic conception of class and the repetition of the phrase 'no matter how we define social class' (pages 296 and 297) indicates his reticence about becoming drawn into the notorious debates over its definition.

Class status, then, can be misrepresented by the fraudulent use of the appropriate symbols. However, the misrepresentation does not provoke legal sanctions. Those who misrepresent their class status 'commit a presumption, not a crime' (ibid:297). Weakened notions of misrepresentation and fraudulence are thus implied. Goffman proceeds to examine six 'restrictive devices' (ibid:297-301) which limit the fraudulent use of symbols of class status:

1. Moral restrictions: those constraints in the person's conscience which forbid misrepresentation.
2. Intrinsic restrictions: the material scarcity of certain symbols such as jewellery or large houses.
3. Natural restrictions: the natural scarcity of certain symbols, such as an artist's output.
4. Socialization restrictions: the behavioural elements of social style (dress, deportment, intonation, vocabulary etc).

5. Cultivation restrictions: skills which require investments of time and energy, such as playing golf.
6. Organic restrictions: features of bodily development which are indicative of class status, such as the effects of diet, work and environment on hand condition.

These restrictions tend to operate in clusters, effectively cross-referencing each other.

The six restrictions operate at the level of 'ordinary communication'. In the last part of the paper (ibid:301-304) Goffman discusses certain structural aspects of the organisation of symbol mobility and change. Three features of this process are identified:

1. Class movement: Class status symbols may sometimes lag behind the actual sources of power, wealth and prestige in a society. Herein lies the classic problem of nouveau riche groups who discover that they can only acquire those symbols which can be purchased and which because they can be purchased are devalued as symbols of class status by established classes.
2. Curator groups: Their task is to build and service the machinery of status eg domestic servants, fashion experts, actors and teachers. They have access to higher symbols than their own class status warrants, and therein resides a source of misrepresentation and false expectation.
3. Circulation of symbols: A class's symbols may be appropriated by another class. In societies where this is common 'conscious life' may become 'meagre and thin' because the symbol signifies status but ill-expresses it (ibid:304).

The 1951 paper contains anticipations of later major themes in Goffman's sociology. The term 'self-representation' makes a brief appearance (p.296) and more importantly, the impression



management thesis of Presentation of Self is evident in embryonic form. There is a definition of the 'working consensus' where the person acts towards others 'in a manner which conveys that his conception of himself and of them is the same as their conception of themselves and him' (ibid:294). However, the description of the working consensus as a 'kind of harmony' was later to be modified to a modus vivendi and even 'a cold war'. Much was also to be made in the impression management thesis of what is here conceived as a more limited hiatus between symbols of class status and the reality of class status. But even here Goffman emphasises the complexities of interpreting symbols as unequivocal evidence of status:

'Status symbols provide the cue that is used in order to discover the status of others and, from this, the way in which others are to be treated. The thoughts and attention of persons engaged in social activity therefore tend to be occupied with these signs of position.' (ibid:304)

And of course much more was to be made in subsequent work of the fraudulent appropriation of status symbols; in fact the possibility of misrepresentation was to come to be seen as a generic feature of the use of any symbol in ordinary communication.

A concern with the fraudulent possibilities inherent in social relationships is prominent in Goffman's next publication, 'On cooling the mark out: some aspects of adaptation to failure' (1952). In it Goffman treats consolation as a social process, drawing on the confidence game in order to unpack features of the

process. There is a final phase of the confidence game which occurs after the 'blow off' or 'sting' has been made but prior to the 'operator's' departure, where the 'mark' is consoled or 'cooled out' about the loss just incurred. The aim of the exercise is to stop the mark 'raising a squawk' and to help the mark to come to terms with the realisation that he is not quite as shrewd as he once believed.

In the 1951 paper Goffman recognised that laying claim to a class status held implications for the nature of the claimant, although this was not a prominent theme. However an explicit focus upon the implications for the self of consolation processes is evident in the 1952 paper. Goffman announces that a consideration of 'adaptation to loss can lead to an understanding of some relations in our society between involvements and the selves that are involved' (1952:451). But whereas Goffman's interest in the earlier paper resides in the discrepancy between actual class status and that implied by a symbol of class status, in 'On cooling the mark out' the problematic discrepancy is between the mark's initial conception of self and the one requiring cooling out.

Goffman's procedure is to offer an initial definition of self simply as a holding device to get the analysis underway, and then towards the end of the paper a lengthier discussion of self, drawing on the conclusions of the analysis, is presented. The individual, Goffman argues, can acquire a self from any status, role or relationship in which he becomes involved and an

alteration in the status role or relationship will bring about an alteration in the person's self-conception (ibid:453). Cooling out is only necessary when the person is involuntarily deprived of a status, role or relationship which reflects unfavourably upon the person. The loss gives rise to humiliation and thus cooling out is required.

Goffman's analysis turns on four general problems about the self and the cooling out process (1) where in society is cooling out called for? (2) what are the typical ways persons can be cooled out? (3) what happens to those who refused to be cooled out? (4) how can cooling out be avoided? In summary, Goffman's solutions to these four problems run thus:

- (1) Cooling out occurs frequently in personal service organisations, when a customer complains; in bureaucracies, when persons fail to meet the requirements for recruitment or advancement; in informal social intercourse, where asymmetrical feelings are expressed towards friendship or courtship; and in dire circumstances, such as when a person is faced with fatal illness or injury, a death sentence, or an impossible military mission.
- (2) Cooling the mark out is accomplished by the following procedures:
  - (a) cooling is done by persons whose status may ease the situation in some way, such as status superiors, doctors or priests.
  - (b) the mark is offered an alternative status as a 'consolation prize'
  - (c) the mark is offered 'another chance' to qualify for a failed role
  - (d) the mark is allowed full expression of his rage, which is seen to have a cathartic function
  - (e) the mark is stalled in order that he may be given a preview of the new conception of self that awaits him
  - (f) a face saving tacit understanding between operator and mark may be established in order to avoid a 'scene'

- (3) The mark who refuses consolation may take the following lines of action:
- (a) sustained personal disorganization, possibly leading to suicide or physical violence.
  - (b) mark may 'raise a squawk'
  - (c) mark may 'turn sour'
  - (d) mark may go into business or competition with the operators
- (4) Operators may avoid cooling the mark out by adopting the following strategies of prevention:
- (a) the strict selection of personnel
  - (b) failed persons may be 'carried'

Marks may avoid the need for cooling out by adopting the following strategies of prevention:

- (a) hedging their commitment
- (b) withholding the facts of their commitment
- (c) keeping two irons in the fire
- (d) maintaining a joking or unserious relationship to the involvement
- (e) 'playing it safe': choosing a job or marriage because tenure is assured

What light does the analysis of cooling out shed on the nature of the self in society? First of all Goffman presents conclusions about the 'structure of persons':

'... a person is an individual who becomes individual in a value of some kind - a role, a status, a relationship, an ideology - and then makes a public claim that he is to be defined and treated as someone who possesses the value or property in question' (ibid:461)

Goffman continues:

'The limits to his claims, and hence the limits to his self, are primarily determined by the objective facts of his social life and secondarily determined by the degree to which a sympathetic interpretation of these facts can bend them to his favour.' (ibid)

Goffman adumbrates an early version of the impression management thesis here, arguing that a person 'tends to be destroyed in the eyes of others' if they realise that he has made a false claim. When the person lays claim to a self, it must be consonant with 'the objective facts of his social life'. However, Goffman acknowledges that there is room for negotiation of the 'facts' which can sustain a viable self. The basic ingredients of the impression management thesis are here; what is absent is its restriction to the sphere of face-to-face interaction.

Given the possibility that persons can be cooled out, what does this tell us about the nature of persons and their activities? First of all, it highlights the existence of the norm which urges persons 'to keep their chins up and make the best of it - a sort of social sanitation enjoining torn and tattered persons to keep themselves packaged up' (ibid). Secondly, that persons can 'sustained these profound embarrassments implies a certain looseness and lack of interpenetration in the organization of his several life-activities' (ibid). Often the person who fails in one role (eg at work) may succeed in another (eg in his marriage). But if the failure spreads over several roles, then the psychotherapist, 'society's cooler' will need to be sent in.

In his concluding remarks Goffman recognises that he has dealt only with the 'sugar coating' of adaptation to failure and not the bitter pill of failure itself. Those who have 'failed' - been sacked, asked to resign, excommunicated, jailed

or defeated - have in a sense become socially 'dead'. Jails, mental institutions, old peoples homes, hobo jungles and the like are places that the socially dead are sifted into, but there are many situations in life where the socially dead and the successful coexist and it is in this sense that 'the dead are sorted but not segregated and continue to walk among the living' (ibid:463).

Finally, the 1952 paper is the first place in which Goffman consciously applies metaphor as a methodological device. A phase of the con game is drawn upon in order to highlight aspects of adaptation to failure. The reader cannot help but be struck by Goffman's exuberance with this new found device: irreverent and arresting comparisons, similes and witticisms tumble out of almost every page. Goffman appears to have found his true metier. But although Goffman was to become renowned for his inventive use of metaphor, it was conspicuous by its absence in his next work, the doctoral dissertation.

### 2.3 Communication Conduct in an Island Community

Goffman's doctoral dissertation, submitted to the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago in December 1953, was the product of twelve months' fieldwork carried out in the Shetland Isles between December 1949 and May 1951. It repays close study because it represents the first, fully-fledged statement of his mature sociological thought. Unlike his earlier work, the focus of investigative attention falls firmly on

face-to-face interaction. It is not a conventional community study but a study of 'conversational interaction' in one community which he hoped would contribute towards the construction of 'a systematic framework useful in studying interaction throughout our society' (1953:1). The importance of this doctoral dissertation is that it is the only truly systematic statement of his central ideas about the sociology of the interaction order - a statement which is, unlike his subsequent writings, largely uncluttered by the particularities of locale and specific research problems, and which lacks the distractions engendered by his later employment of colourful metaphors.

How did Goffman, a Canadian studying at an American university, come to carry out research in the Shetland Isles? Once again, Lloyd Warner provides the link. Warner received an invitation from an old acquaintance, *Ralph Pittington*, who headed the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, to send him a graduate student who would be appointed to the post of 'Instructor'. The Department had been established in 1946 and Pittington wanted a good doctoral student who could help to galvanise the new structure (Winkin, 1988:51-52). Warner suggested Goffman, who began work at the University of Edinburgh in October 1949. From the start, the Edinburgh department endeavoured to resist narrow disciplinary compartmentalisation and it encouraged 'anthropology at home', i.e. anthropological investigations of the anthropologist's own society (see Little, 1960). Although a popular tradition of work today, it was far

less common in the late 1940s. Goffman's mentor, W. Lloyd Warner, was an early exponent of the tradition. He conducted fieldwork in Australia (A Black Civilization, 1935) before going on to carry out the famous 'Yankee City' studies in the 1940s. At the time when Goffman was in the Shetland Isles, other members of the Edinburgh department (including James Littlejohn, S.F. Collins and Michael Banton) were studying farming communities and aspects of race relations in Britain (see Anon, 1951).

In seeking to construct a systematic framework for the study of conversational interaction Goffman employed the usual anthropological technique of ethnography, but he stresses that his aim is primarily systematic, not ethnographic: the dissertation is not an ethnography of the Shetland Isle community. Moreover, his interest lay solely in the characteristics of interactional practices. Questions about the frequency, intensity, history and functions of these practices, proper as they are, fell outside the remit of the dissertation.

Goffman describes his fieldwork role thus:

'I settled down in the community as an American college student interested in gaining firsthand experience in the economics of island farming. Within these limits I tried to play an unexceptional and acceptable role in community life. My real aim was to be an observant participant, rather than a participating observer.'  
(ibid:2)

Goffman participated in a wide range of situations, such as meals, work, schooling, shopping, weddings, parties, and funerals and studied certain situations in which he was a regular



participant - village socials, billiard games and hotel life - more intensively. He experienced hotel life both as a guest and as 'second dishwasher' during the summer months. In the early months of the study he was able to take notes in the course of the events he was witnessing, but later found himself in situations where note-taking would have been regarded as improper and so the recording of observations had to wait until the end of the day. Systematic interviewing was not undertaken, but some interviews were conducted on matters which 'the islanders felt were proper subjects for interviews' (ibid:5) and presumably which they thought was proper for an American student ostensibly interested in the economics of subsistence agriculture.

The study took place in 'Dixon', a village of approximately 100 households. The main class cleavage was between the 'gentry' (numbering two families in Dixon) and the 'locals' or 'commoner' class (ibid:17). *Goffman collected a large amount of data about the activities occurring at the socials, during billiards and at the hotel. The social evenings were held in Dixon's community hall every fortnight between September and March. At 8pm the 'planned entertainment' (usually whist, although sometimes a concert or auction) would begin and continue until around 11pm when tea and buns were served. After this intermission a dance was held which often continued to 2.30 in the morning. The socials apparently served as the focal point of the social life of many islanders and were generally well-attended. Billiards, played in the reading room of the community hall, attracted a more select group of the Dixon*

population, chiefly men aged 25-35 and 50-65. Here the business of the community could be conducted in informal conditions; solidarity between the younger and older generation was forged and older community leaders were afforded the opportunity to train the upcoming generation. Possibly the most memorable illustrations from the Shetland fieldwork stem from the hotel where Goffman stayed and worked. The young women considered the 'leading belles' of Dixon customarily worked in the hotel in the summer months. The hotel attracted a middle and upper class clientele and served 'as a centre of diffusion of higher class British values' (ibid:30) among the predominantly lower class inhabitants of Dixon. As Goffman was at different times both guest and second dishwasher at the hotel, he was able to gain two views of the life of one hotel.

Conversational interaction is viewed most fundamentally by Goffman as 'one species of social order' (ibid:1). Consequently, the first analytical chapter of the dissertation sets out a model of social order derived from Parsons' The Social System (1951) and especially Chester I. Barnard's The Functions of the Executive (1947). Goffman's procedure is to articulate a general model of social order in nine propositions, applying each in turn to the phenomenon of conversational interaction. In other words, he shows how ideas originally developed to handle institutional issues can be carried forward to the study of interactional matters. Also, in adopting this procedure Goffman<sup>f</sup> is able to effect a comparison between the social order of interaction and other kinds of social order. Since Goffman

acknowledges the foundational character of the application of the model of social order to social interaction for the framework he is beginning to build, and since much is made of the notion of interaction's orderliness in his later work without the constitutents of that orderliness being anywhere near as systematically set out as here, this chapter will be treated at length.

1. 'Social order is found where the differential activity of different actors is integrated into a single whole, allowing thereby for the conscious or unconscious realisation of certain overall ends or functions.' (1953:33)

The differential activity of conversational interaction consists of communicative acts, i.e. a flow of messages is exchanged between participants. One participant's message constitutes the starting point of the next participant's message, and the continuous and uninterrupted exchange of messages comprises the 'work flow of conversational interaction'.

2. 'The contribution of an actor is a legitimate expectation for other actors; they are able to know beforehand within what limits the actor is likely to behave, and they have a moral right to expect him to behave within these limits. Correspondingly, he ought to behave in a way that is expected of him because he feels that this is a morally desirable way of behaving and not merely an expeditious way of behaving.' (ibid:34)

This proposition, reminiscent especially of Parsons' notion of 'complementarity of expectations', translates unproblematically to conversational interaction.

3. 'Proper contribution from participants is assured or "motivated" by means of a set of positive sanctions or rewards and negative sanctions or rewards and negative sanctions or punishments. These sanctions grant or withdraw immediately expressed social approval and goods of a more instrumental kind. These sanctions support and help to delineate social rules that are both prescriptive and proscriptive, enjoining certain activity and forbidding other activity.' (ibid:34)

This proposition corresponds to Parsons' 'motivational problem of order' (1951:30-33), a functional problem which faces social systems: how is potentially disruptive behaviour to be minimised? The characteristic feature of the social order of conversational interaction is that it is enforced by sanctions that can be immediately expressed, i.e. moral approval and disapproval, expressed in the course of interaction, rather than by more distant instrumental sanctions.

4. 'Any concrete social order must occur within a wider social context. The flow of action between the order and its social environment must come under regulation that is integrated into the order as such. Maintenance of this regulated relation depends on the maintenance of social order in the environment. On the whole, the stress here is on negative sanctions enjoining non-interference, as opposed to positive sanctions enjoining specific contributions exchanged between the order and its environment.' (ibid:35)

This feature can be applied directly to conversational interaction. This proposition provides one reason for Goffman's assumption that the social order of interaction is relatively autonomous of other kinds of social order to which it is nonetheless linked.

5. 'When the rules are not adhere to, or when no rules seem applicable participants cease to know how to behave or what to expect from others. At the social level, the integration of the participant's actions breaks down and we have social disorganization or social disorder. At the same time, the participants suffer personal disorganization and anomie.' (ibid)

In conversational interaction disorganisation is usually experienced by participants as embarrassment.

6. 'A person who breaks rules is an offender; his breaking them is an offense. He who breaks rules continuously is a deviant.' (ibid)

When applied to the case of conversational interaction, offenders can be described as gauche, de trop and out of place. Their offences (i.e. acts causing embarrassment) can be described as bricks, howlers, gaffes, faux pas and boners. In the ways these offences contrast with the orderliness ordinarily expected in conversational interaction, they serve to highlight the requirements for interaction to run smoothly. Those who persistently deviate in this way can be called 'faulty persons'.

7. 'When a rule is broken, the offender ought to feel guilty or remorseful, and the offended ought to feel righteously indignant.' (ibid:36)

In conversational interaction, the offender's guilt, and that of those who have identified with him, is felt as shame; the offended will feel shocked, affronted and impatient. Thus conversational interaction is also a moral order whose rules are internalised by participants.

8. 'An offense to or infraction of the social order calls forth emergency correctives which reestablish the threatened order, compensating for the damage done to it. These compensatory actions will tend to reinstate not only the work flow but also the moral norms which regulated it. Some of these correctives will also serve as negative sanctions against the offender.'  
(ibid)

Although offended participants in conversational interaction may respond drastically to offences by withdrawing from the interaction or ignoring the offender, it is more usual for them to respond in an attitude of tolerance and forbearance, giving rise to a 'working acceptance' maintained by the employment of 'protective strategies' and 'corrective strategies'.

9. 'Given the rules of the social order, we find that individual participants develop ruses and tricks for achieving private ends that are proscribed by the rules, in such a way as not to break the rules.'  
(ibid:38)

Private ends are sought in conversational interaction through 'gain strategies' which alter the working acceptance just enough to suit the individual's wishes.

The social order model does not sufficiently emphasise the forbearant maintenance of the working acceptance, which Goffman regards as the crucial characteristic of conversational interaction. That a participant is required to be forbearant implies feelings of hostility or resentment towards the person who must be forbearantly accepted. It also implies a potential discrepancy between his 'real' feelings and those shown towards

other participants. Offences against the social order of conversation are so common that:

'... it is often better to conceive of interaction not as a scene of harmony but as an arrangement for pursuing a cold war. A working acceptance may thus be likened to a temporary truce, a modus vivendi for carrying on negotiations and vital business.' (ibid:40)

A forbearant outlook is thus constantly required and this is 'one of the few general bases of real consensus between persons' (ibid). However, we need to be wary, Goffman suggests, about oversimplifying the motivations behind this forbearance.

By treating conversational interaction in this way as a species of social order Goffman succeeds in placing its study squarely within sociology. Moreover Goffman indicates how the orderliness of conversational interaction is produced in actual instances by the practices of the participants. The corollary is that conversational interaction's order can be threatened through these same practices: a major axis of the direction taken by many of Goffman's analyses.

The remainder of the dissertation falls into three parts of increasing empirical content (see the table of contents listed in Appendix C). Goffman begins with an analysis of information about one's self. The characteristics of linguistic and expressive behaviour are described and contrasted and the role of each in the management of information about oneself is discussed in a chapter anticipating the 'Introduction' to Presentation of Self. Ichheiser's (1949) observation that the

expression of one person becomes the impression that the other has of him is cited and the differing communication consequences of linguistic and expressive messages is emphasised. An expressive message is taken rather than sent, conveyed rather than communicated, and the recipient plays a more active role than the sender. Since recipients will scrutinise both linguistic and expressive messages in the furtherance of their ends, senders will tend to exert 'tactical control' (ibid:74) over both linguistic and expressive messages. However recipients are favoured by a communicative asymmetry: whilst senders tend to be concerned mainly with the linguistic aspect of their behaviour, recipients can observe both linguistic and expressive streams of behaviour. Expressive messages will be used as a check on linguistic messages and a 'game of concealment and search' (ibid:84) emerges where the advantage in discovering facts about the individual lies with the recipient. Whilst expressive behaviour is usually considered to be involuntary and calculated, Goffman notes the possibility that it may be modified by the sender 'with malice aforethought' and concludes that 'a very complex dialectic is in progress' (ibid:87) between the expressive and the linguistic in conversational interaction.

An important qualification to this emphasis on calculative elements in the control of information about one's self is given in Goffman's discussion of 'sign situations'. These are situations where an irrelevant, improper or incorrect evaluation is conveyed and tension arises in the interaction. In such situations 'diplomatic labor' (ibid:102) is required of the



participants to rectify the impression conveyed. Sign situations indicate the need for participants to exercise some responsibility for the impressions they provide to ensure that these impressions are not offensive to recipients. Thus, conversational interaction generates problems of ritual management as well as informational management: the other is a sacred object whose attributes must be constantly honoured. Goffman concludes:

'... the best model for an object to which we give consideration is not a person at all, but a sacred idol, image, or god. It is to such sacred objects that we show in extreme what we show to persons. We feel that these objects possess some sacred value, whether positive and purifying, or negative and polluting, and we feel disposed to perform rites before these objects. These rites we perform as frequently and compulsively as the sacred value of the object is great. These worshipful acts express our adoration, or fear, or hate, and serve for the idol as periodic assurances that we are keeping faith and deserve to be in its favor. When in the idol's immediate presence we act with ritual care, appreciating that pious actions may favorably dispose the idol toward us and that impious actions may anger the idol and cause it to perform angry actions against us. Persons, unless they are of high office, do not have as much sacred power or mana as do idols, and hence need not be trusted with as much ceremony. An idol is to a person as a rite is to etiquette.' (ibid:104)

From the very outset, Goffman's sociology has a place for considerateness as well as calculation.

In the following part of the dissertation, 'The concrete units of conversational communication' Goffman presents his basic terminology for the analysis of his species of social order, including 'social occasion', 'interplay' (a precursor of

'encounter'), 'accredited participation', and 'safe supplies'. Although some of these concepts appear in Goffman's later published work in modified form, it is noteworthy that many of his central ideas about the organisation of interaction had already crystallised by 1953. There is an important sense in which Goffman can be regarded as enlarging and filling in the small print of a conceptual scheme the outlines of which had been adumbrated in 1953. One example: the 'statement' and 'reply' model of conversational sequencing presented in Forms of Talk (1981:13) is sketched in the dissertation (1953:119,176).

The last part of the dissertation, 'Conduct during interplay' opens with an important distinction between euphoric and dysphoric interplay. In dysphoric interplay participants 'feel ill at ease', out of countenance, nonplussed, self-conscious, embarrassed or out of place because of the sheer presence of others or because of the actions of others (ibid:243). When these conditions are absent from the interplay it can be described as euphoric. Despite the psychological language in which the distinction is couched, Goffman maintains that euphoria and dysphoria are features of interplay, not participant's feelings (ibid:246-247). Thus personally distressing information can be conveyed in euphoric interplay and good news conveyed in a way that leaves the participant feeling embarrassed. How euphoric interplay is possible is a major concern of the last part of Goffman's dissertation.

One solution lies in the nature of the participant's involvement in interplay. Euphoric interplay will result when participants show the kind of involvement proper to the interplay in question. To show too little or too much involvement is likely to generate dysphoria. A state of proper involvement, Goffman (ibid:257) concludes, requires a little bending of the rules of tact. This state lies between the boredom engendered by fully following the rules of tact and the embarrassment that occurs when these rules are broken.

Spontaneous involvement is thus the desired state of involvement in interplay. But some persons seem to be chronically incapable of routinely achieving this state. These Goffman labels 'faulty persons'; they 'bring offense and dysphoria to almost every interplay in which they participate, causing others to feel ill at ease whether or not the offenders themselves are embarrassed' (ibid:260). Faulty persons highlight the importance of how one handles oneself during interplay: 'poise' (ibid:275).

Participants project a certain definition of themselves and other participants by every word and gesture they make. These definitions, together with whatever participants know about each other and the appropriate responses to given categories of person and symbols of status constitute for Goffman 'a preliminary state of social information' (ibid:300) which provides the datum for the interplay. Participants will usually seek to validate these initial understandings. Thus interplay

tends to be 'an inherently conservative thing' (ibid:301) in which participants will merely elaborate and modify the initial understandings. Sometimes, however, something may occur during the course of an interplay which discredits the self projected through the initial definition of the situation. This represents a threat to the working acceptance.

To avoid or remedy such threats protective and corrective strategies are employed. Goffman discusses at length (ibid:329-324) the role of discretion, hedging, politeness, unseriousness, sangfroid, feigned indifference and non-observance of the disruptive incident. The employment of these strategies comprise some of the leading methods whereby projected selves can be managed in interplay.

In the concluding chapter Goffman introduces the term he was only to make famous as a description of the focal concern of his sociology in a posthumous paper (1983a), 'the interaction order'. (It is curious that Goffman did not use this apt label earlier to characterise his central interest, for the alternatives he proposes such as the study of 'public life' or 'public order' are much more unsatisfactory, as he recognised himself; see 1963a:8-9; 1971:xi/n.l.) The interaction order organises the communicative conduct of persons in face-to-face interaction. In 1953 Goffman saw the interaction order as a very basic social order, though neither then nor later did he make grand claims for its primacy either to sociologists or participants. In the concluding chapter Goffman writes:

'In this study I have attempted to abstract from diverse comings-together in Dixon the orderliness that is common to all of them, the orderliness that obtains by virtue of the fact that those present are engaged in spoken communication. All instances of engagement-in-speech are seen as members of a single class of events, each of which exhibits the same kind of social order, giving rise to the same kind of social organization in response to the same kind of normative structure and the same kind of social control. Regardless of the specific roles and capacities which an individual employs when he engaged in interaction, he must in addition take the role of communicator and participant; regardless of the particular content of the spoken communication, order must prevail in the flow of messages by which the content is conveyed.' (ibid:345)

Among Goffman's suggestions for further research of the interaction order is the proposal that, since so much of the relevant conduct is so easily taken for granted, it may prove helpful to investigate 'extraordinary events to open our eyes to what ordinarily occurs' (ibid:360). This provides one methodological rationale for the first job Goffman took after leaving the University of Chicago, as Research Associate on the Visiting Scientist Program at the Laboratory of Socio-Environmental Studies, National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Maryland. In this position Goffman undertook his famous studies of the mental patient's situation.

#### 2.4 The Systematic Basis of Goffman's Sociology

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is sometimes thought of as the book of the doctoral dissertation. This is plainly not the case; although many of the ideas developed in the dissertation figure in Presentation of Self, the latter is in large part a substantially new work. The absence of metaphor as

a methodological device in the dissertation is another point of contrast. Presumably the conventions of dissertation writing, if not his dissertation advisors, discouraged Goffman from going down that road. In its place we find a thorough and systematic treatment of the basic assumptions of his approach; certainly a treatment that is fuller and more systematic than Goffman felt inclined to give in his published books and papers. And since, as we shall argue (cf Williams, 1980 and 1988), these basic assumptions changed little in the following thirty years, the doctoral dissertation is an important document for students of Goffman's sociology.

The systematic treatment provided by the dissertation can also help us to understand the overall shape of the corpus of Goffman's writings. First of all, none of Goffman's books appeared as second editions nor were any of his papers rewritten after they had been published. The partial exceptions - which prove the rule - are the Presentation of Self which appeared in two versions, and Gender Advertisements. But the 1959 edition of Presentation differs from the 1956 version in simply being longer (see Appendix E): the new material does not in any way substantially alter the text but is simply added to the 1956 version. The difference between the 1976 and 1979 versions of Gender Advertisements amount to no more than minor textual modifications and a few new pictures. Arguments have not been reconsidered or re-written. Goffman's books and papers invariably start from a new conceptual scratch; Goffman gives the impression of constantly beginning anew rather than developing a

cumulative enterprise. The point is made trenchantly by Sharrock:

'... each [of Goffman's books] is written as though the others had never been... If conceptual articulation is to be such a significant element in each study I can only ask why Goffman erects and abandons schemes with such astonishing regularity and seeming indifference? He seems to place no value whatsoever on his own earlier work as a basis for his later studies...'  
(1976:332-333)

It could be argued that the reason why Goffman's corpus displays these tendencies is because the doctoral dissertation provided a systematic treatment of the basic elements of a sociology of the interaction order. Once that was in place, as it could be argued it was by 1953, then there was clearly a need to develop, refine, articulate and test out the components of the system. And this is what Goffman's subsequently published work does, although admittedly in a way which does not disclose in satisfactory detail the relation of the current conceptual framework to earlier ones. Thus, the doctoral dissertation comprises the only truly systematic treatment and the remainder of Goffman's career is spent working at the framework and its fundamental phenomenon, the interaction order, using a range of approaches and in the context of a variety of research locales (surgical operations, mental institutions, gambling casinos, radio stations) to deepen and refine it. It is as if Goffman was constantly dissatisfied with his own earlier efforts and constantly seeking to improve upon them. Alternatively, the absence of revised editions of his books could be regarded as a resistance to seeing any one of them

as 'permanent' expressions of 'Goffman's sociology'. Rather, each book and paper can be read as the product of certain ideas coming together at certain times, the product of a unique constellation of biographical and intellectual processes taking place against the background of the developing interests in interaction in several academic specialisms upon which Goffman drew (cf. David, 1980; Goffman, 1981b; Hymes, 1984). Goffman's frequent declarations of exploratory intent (eg 1961a:5; 1963b:Preface; 1981:1) may serve to overstate the sense in which Goffman was operating from a new conceptual scratch. He was surely correct to insist that 'a loose speculative approach to a fundamental area of conduct is better than a rigorous blindness to it' (1963a:4) but that looseness and speculation was not conducted ab initio. Rather these exploratory investigations were firmly rooted in the doctoral dissertation's framework and its subsequent evolution in Goffman's published work.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace these connections in detail. However two general points may be noted. First of all, the exploratory intent was advanced in large part by Goffman's mastery of the essay format; this will be examined further in chapter five. Here we will simply note Goffman's own justification (from Asylums) of the virtues of the essay format, as against the systematic monograph:

'This method of presenting material may be irksome to the reader, but it allows me to pursue the main theme of each paper analytically and comparatively past the point that would be allowable in chapters of an integrated book.. if sociological concepts are to be treated with affection, each must be traced back to



where it best applies, followed from there to wherever it seems to lead, and pressed to disclose the rest of its family. Better, perhaps, different clothes to clothe the children well than a single splendid tent in which they all shiver.' (1961:xiii-xiv)

One index of just how productive Goffman found the essay format is that of his eleven books, only five - Presentation of Self, Behavior in Public Places, Stigma, Frame Analysis and Gender Advertisements - could be described as monographs, and two of these are relatively short monographs. The rest are collections of essays on themes that are related but which lack a thread uniting them into a single whole. Secondly, whilst the first of his 'mature' sociological writings, the doctoral dissertation, is designed to be a systematic framework, there is no final synthesis pulling together the results of his subsequent intellectual journeyings. Moreover, it is questionable whether the absence of a definitive ordering of his sociology in any way compromises the success of Goffman's enterprise (who now reads von Wiese?). System builders in the formal mode run the risk of producing a narrow, static and merely classificatory sociology, a danger which Goffman's essayism partly seeks to avoid (cf. Smith, 1989a:54). It will be argued in chapters four and five that Goffman's sociology as a whole displays systematic intent, but no desire to build an overall system.

The argument, then, is that when taken as a whole Goffman's mature sociological writings, somewhat shapeless and disorderly as they sometimes appear, reflect a serious commitment to work in a 'context of discovery' rather than a 'context of

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TYPOLOGIES (from Birrell, 1978:132)(1) Underlying Elements of Interactions

- I organization of interaction
- II regions of interaction
- III mechanics of social order
- IV information in interaction
- V involvement in interaction
- VI individuals in interaction
- VII relationships in interaction

(2) Elements of Interactional Flow

- I euphoric interplay
- II dysphoric interplay
- III incidents

(3) The Ritual Order of Interactions

- I ritual
- II supportive interchange
  - A. positive rituals
  - B. negative rituals
  - C. exaggerated rituals
- III non-supportive interaction
  - A. fabrication
    - 1. exploitative fabrications
    - 2. benign fabrications
    - 3. contested fabrications
  - B. management
    - 1. exploitative management
    - 2. benign management

(4) Guidelines for Interpreting Interactions

- I frame
- II transformations
- III retransformations

justification', to use Reichenbach's (1964) well-known distinction. Or, in the phrase of Garfinkel et al (1981) the constant new beginnings and new conceptual frameworks can be seen as a serious commitment to a 'discovering science' aimed at exploring the basic units and processes of the interaction order. This characterisation of Goffman's publishing history in no way denies the possibility of reconstructing a unified model of interaction from Goffman's work. Perhaps the most comprehensive effort in this direction has been attempted by Susan J. Birrell (1978).

Birrell combed Goffman's writings for every distinct concept she could find. Each term and definition was typed on a 6x4 card and the survey revealed a population of concepts numbering in excess of 900. The cards were then compared and ordered into a logical arrangement. The product of this process of model building, which resembled, according to Birrell, 'a rampant game of solitaire' (1978:128), is reproduced as Table 1 which presents the broad outlines of her scheme. Each item identified by a roman numeral is a typology which arranges Goffman's concepts, their synonyms and related terms. The full presentation of the typologies and the definitions of concepts runs to nearly one hundred pages of text (ibid:136-231). As Table 1 indicates, Birrell found it necessary to invent certain terms, such as 'benign management' and 'contested fabrications' to organise aspects of Goffman's conceptual terminology that could not be ordered by means of his own concepts.

FIGURE 2

A CLASSIFICATION OF GOFFMAN'S MATURE SOCIOLOGICAL WRITINGS

<p><b>INTERACTIONAL SYSTEMATICS</b></p> <p>(1) <u>Postdoctoral articulations</u></p> <p>'On face-work' (1955)            'Deference and demeanor' (1956)  <u>The Presentation of Self in            Everyday Life</u> (1956/1959)            'Embarrassment and social            organization' (1956)            'Alienation from interaction' (1957)</p> <p>(2) <u>Later articulations</u></p> <p>'Role distance' (1961)  <u>Behavior in Public Places</u> (1963)            'Where the action is' (1967)  <u>Strategic Interaction</u> (1969)  <u>Relations in Public</u> (1971)            'The interaction order' (1983)</p>	<p><b>PROBLEMATIC PARTICIPATION            FRAMEWORKS AND STATUSES</b></p> <p>(1) <u>Arising from mental illness</u></p> <p>'On some convergences of            sociology and psychiatry' (1957)  <u>Asylums</u> (1961)            'Mental symptoms and public            order' (1964)            'The insanity of place' (1969)</p> <p>(2) <u>Arising from stigmatization</u>  <u>Stigma</u> (1963)</p> <p>(3) <u>Arising from genderisms</u></p> <p>'The arrangement between            the sexes' (1977)  <u>Gender Advertisements</u> (1979)</p>
<p><b>FRAME ANALYSIS</b></p> <p>(1) <u>Programmatics</u></p> <p>'Fun in games' (1961)  <u>Frame Analysis</u> (1974)</p> <p>(2) <u>Applications</u></p> <p>'Picture frames', ch.2 of  <u>Gender Advertisements</u> (1979)  <u>Forms of Talk</u> (1981)            'Felicity's condition' (1983)</p>	<p><b>ANALYTICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL            REFLECTIONS</b></p> <p>'Preface' to <u>Encounters</u> (1961)            'The neglected situation' (1964)            'Introduction' to <u>Interaction Ritual</u> (1967)            'Preface' to <u>Relations in Public</u> (1971)            'Reply to Denzin and Keller' (1981)            'Program committee encourages papers on            range of methodologies' (1981)            'Microsociologie et histoire' (1983)</p>

Although aspects of Birrell's typologising efforts may be queried (eg is there sufficient difference between dysphoric interplay and incidents to warrant the separate typologies proposed?) this chapter is not the place to assess the adequacy of the schema. It does, however, represent a major attempt to specify the systematic basis of Goffman's sociology (for a less formalised effort in the same direction, see Giddens, 1988). In this chapter a more modest proposal is made for ordering Goffman's sociology, or more specifically, his sociological writings (see Figure 2). These are grouped in four categories: (1) interactional systematics (2) frame analysis (3) problematic participation frameworks and statuses and (4) analytical and methodological reflections. The first category comprises the largest part of Goffman's writings which analyse the general properties of the interaction order; the second is composed of those writings animated by the experiential rather than situational concerns of frame analysis. The third category groups together a collection of empirically more localised investigations of problematic participation frameworks and statuses, such as the mentally ill, the disfigured, and women (and children). These studies include what are commonly regarded as Goffman's writings on deviant persons and behaviour, but in view of Goffman's own reservations about the generality and over-use of the term (1963b:140n.1.) it is avoided here in preference to the notion of problematic participation frameworks and statuses. Goffman defines participation status as an individual's 'capacities and privileges' relevant to his role as

interactant in a given conversational encounter. A participation framework refers to the relation of all the individuals in the encounter to what is currently transpiring (1974:224; 1981a:137). In view of Goffman's own interest in the interactional manifestations (or, in his special meaning of the term, the 'socially situated' nature) of deviant persons and behaviours, this seems to be an appropriate covering term. 'Analytical and methodological reflections' is something of a residual category used to collect together Goffman's various observations about the broad character of his sociological enterprise. Whilst not a perfect categorisation, this schema does serve to bring some order to Goffman's publication list. These categories will be used to organise the account given in the remainder of the chapter. Treatment of particular books and papers will be necessarily brief; the aim is simply to sketch leading concerns and central concepts.

## 2.5 Analytical and Methodological Reflections

Let us begin with Goffman's statements of intent about the scope of his sociological enterprise and how he conceived of its conduct. As these are discussed in details in chapters four and five, only a brief survey is required here.

In Goffman's only direct and extended reply to his critics he argues that he had always tried to treat interaction 'as a system in its own right, at its own level', a notion he derived from the functionalism of Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown. He continues: 'It is that bias which led me to try to treat

face-to-face interaction as a domain in its own right in my dissertation, and to try to rescue the term "interaction" from the place where the great social psychologists and their avowed followers seemed prepared to leave it' (1981b:62). Goffman's readers and critics did not always show a good understanding of this distinctive focus and the new separate branch of sociology which Goffman was pioneering, and thus in several of his works an attempt is made to clarify the central focus of analytic attention by comparison with related fields of study.

In the 'Preface' to Encounters Goffman resolves to clarify the difference between the study of face-to-face interaction and the study of small groups such as families or committees. In a discussion which was presaged by remarks in the doctoral dissertation (see 1953:112n.1.) Goffman stresses the need to differentiate between the individual's capacities as a member of a group and his capacities as an interactant. Confusion is likely to occur because meetings of small groups involve face-to-face interaction. Goffman emphasises the contrasting organisational properties of small groups and face-to-face interaction (regulation of entering and leaving, capacity for collective action, leadership roles, latent and manifest functions for the environing society vs. maintenance of poise, adherence to a code for taking and relinquishing the speaker role, allocation of spatial position etc). Copresence is a defining feature of face-to-face interaction, whereas small groups exist apart from the times when their members are physically present. Face-to-face interaction can occur between

people who only meet once and who in no sense could be described as comprising a small group (1961b:9-13).

In the 'Introduction' to Interaction Ritual Goffman addresses the relation of face-to-face interaction to psychology. 'The ultimate behavioural materials' of interaction are 'the glances, gestures, positionings and verbal statements' of individuals which are 'the external signs of orientation and involvement' (1967:1). These are not of interest for what they tell us about the individual as an individual, as psychology would have it, but are 'examined with respect to their social organization' (ibid). Goffman continues: 'I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of differing persons mutually present to one another' (1967:2). A kindred discussion is found in the 'Preface' to Strategic Interaction where the overlaps between the study of communication and that of interaction are noted, once more with the aim of setting out what is distinctive about the study of face-to-face interaction.

That preface also contains the clearest statement of Goffman's analytical task 'My ultimate interest is to develop the study of face-to-face interaction as a naturally-bounded, analytically coherent field - a sub-area of sociology' (1969:ix). Face-to-face interaction is a domain of social life which is characterised by 'co-presence', the bodily presence of persons. Whenever we are present before others we convey something of



ourselves to them through our talk ('expressions given') and through how we are talking, through our posture, glances, our apparent disposition and so forth ('expressions given off'). As Goffman points out every sane adult is 'wonderfully accomplished' (1981a:2) at producing these expressions and at appreciating their significance when enacted by a co-present person. Even complete silence and immobility conveys something to others about the person. Goffman's sociology takes as its starting point the 'comingling' that occurs in 'social situations' ie those environments where 'two or more persons are in one another's response presence' (1983a:2). (Note the special meaning of Goffman's definition of the social situation which he consistently holds to.)

Goffman considers the field of face-to-face interaction to be 'naturally bounded'. He maintains that the realm of face-to-face social situations constitutes a distinct dimension of social life which is worthy of study simply 'because it is there' (1983:17). Goffman writes:

'... it is in social situations that individuals can communicate in the fullest sense of the term, and it is only in them that individuals can physically coerce one another, assault one another, interact sexually, importune one another gesturally, give physical comfort, and so forth. Moreover, it is in social situations that most of the world's work gets done.'  
(1979:5-6)

But Goffman is not prepared to claim any privileged status for his chosen field of study, in part because he does not consider

face-to-face interaction, everyday life or any other realm to occupy a position of ontological or epistemological primacy. Instead, he simply proposes that there are several very general features of face-to-face interaction that make for its 'natural boundedness'. Thus face-to-face interaction has a 'promissory, evidential character' which facilitates the ordinary capacity to make inferences from the expressions 'given' and 'given off' by others. But there are other, no less important general features. Face-to-face activities - an after-dinner speech, a courtesy extended to another - are circumscribed in time and space, hence one of Goffman's favoured terms for them: 'small behaviors'. There is little or no latent phase in much interactional activity, so that to postpone an activity (such as responding to a question) can be highly consequential for the subsequent course of the interaction. There is a distinct psychobiological dimension to face-to-face interaction. The biological and psychological make-up of the individual is centrally implicated, so that at the very least the attention of interactants is required, and often also an appropriate emotional stance, bodily orientation and perhaps some physical effort (1983a:3). Consequently personal territory, in both the physical and psychological sense, is of importance.

Goffman also seeks to lend 'analytical coherence' to the study of face-to-face interaction. His central accomplishment is to show how interaction has a social organisation that is amenable to sociological investigation. Now sometimes Goffman's work is dismissively labelled as 'social

psychology'. The charge is that Goffman's work is interesting enough but is, in the end, not truly sociological in character and is frankly rather peripheral to central sociological concerns. Goffman occasionally lends credence to such views (eg 1974:13-14). The standard source of this complaint is Goffman's substantive focus on interactional details and their implications for the selves of interactants. The complaint is, however, a misleading and largely mistaken one, for there is no psychological reductionism in Goffman's interactional analyses, which are governed by thoroughly sociological principles. Goffman approaches interaction as a social reality in its own right. Thus for example conversation is seen as a little social system with its own boundary-maintaining tendencies' (1957:47). Interaction is treated as socially-organised, ie seen to consist of a range of elements, glances, posture, tone of talk, physical appearance, dress etc) which are arranged and related in socially-defined ways. Thus Goffman shows how the various constituent elements of interaction are socially arranged and collectively co-ordinated in the production of the encounter.

The treatment of face-to-face interaction in its own right as a phenomenon of investigation stands opposed to the more usual social scientific approach which treats interactional particulars as 'effects' (1983a:2) or as 'providing us with a new bagful of indicators to do something correlational with' (1964b:133). But the processes and structures of face-to-face interaction will not be disclosed by such investigative procedures. Instead, Goffman recommends 'standing close'

(1961b:43) to the topic matter through 'unsystematic naturalistic investigation' (1971:xvii). Numerous endorsements of naturalism as an investigative procedure are to be found throughout Goffman's work, without the details of the method ever being spelt out. One example, from the chapter on 'Remedial interchanges':

'This brings the study of remedial activity into the street, into the little interactions that are forgotten about as soon as they occur, into what serious students of society never collect, into the slop of social life.' (1971:138)

The endeavour to 'stand close' to the details of interaction makes Goffman a kind of 'anthropologist's sociologist' (Fallers, 1962:191). If the method has deficiencies, it certainly fares no worse than the 'traditional research designs' used in this area. Goffman's sharp critique is worth citing in full:

'the findings of these studies are assumed to hold more broadly than the particularities of their execution can immediately warrant; in each case a second study would be necessary to determine of whom and what the results are true. The variables which emerge tend to be creatures of research designs that have no existence outside the room in which the apparatus and subjects are located, except perhaps briefly when a replication or a 'continuity' is performed under sympathetic auspices and a full moon. Concepts are devised on the run in order to get on with setting things up so that trials can be performed and the effects of controlled variation of some kind or other measured, the science of which is assured by the use of lab coats and government money. The work begins with the sentence "we hypothesize that..." goes on from there to a full discussion of the biases and limits of the proposed design, reasons why these aren't nullifying, and culminates in an appreciable number of satisfyingly significant correlations tending to confirm some of the hypotheses: as though the uncovering of pattern in social life were that simple. A sort of sympathetic

magic seems to be involved, the assumption being that if you go through the motions attributable to science then science will result. But it hasn't. (Five years after publication, many of these efforts reminded one of the experiments children perform with Gilbert sets: "Follow instructions and you can be a real chemist, just like the picture on the box.") Fields of naturalistic study have not been uncovered through these methods. Concepts have not emerged that reorder our view of social activity. Frameworks have not been established into which a continuously larger number of facts can be placed. Understanding of ordinary behaviour has not accumulated; distance has.' (1971:xviii).

This critique generalises the main thrust of Goffman's complaint in his Master's dissertation that the practice of research guided by experimental principles cannot meet the strict demands the method itself imposes. As for Goffman's own use of 'unsystematic naturalistic investigation', it can be broadly characterised as comparative and inductive in ambition. As Robin Williams (1988:69) has observed, Goffman provides few clues to how the method is to be carried out in actual investigations, but it does signal a clear commitment to a logic of discovery.

## 2.6 Interactional Systematics

### 2.6.1 Postdoctoral Articulations

Under this rubric can be collected together the four papers appearing in the mid-fifties (Goffman, 1955; page references are to the more accessible source, Goffman 1967) and The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, a shorter edition of which was published in Edinburgh in 1956 to be followed three years later by the full US edition (Goffman 1956a, 1959a). Each of these items amplify and articulate certain themes that were

already present in the doctoral dissertation; they represent Goffman's earliest published explorations of the interaction order. After obtaining his PhD in December 1953 Goffman spent most of 1954 working as a Research Associate on 'a study of the characteristics of social interaction of individuals' (Goffman, 1967:45) directed by William Soskin of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago. 'On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction' is a product of this research project.

In what is just possibly Goffman's finest paper the Chinese conception of face is adopted to analyse aspects of the ritual dimension of face-to-face encounters. The person's verbal and non-verbal acts in these encounters are described as the 'line' he takes through which he expresses his view of himself, other participants and the situation. 'Face' is defined as 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during during a particular social contact' (ibid). A person's feelings are 'attached' <sup>to face</sup> but these feelings are sustained in interaction by the person's own acts and those of others. Face is thus an interactional, not a personal construct: the feelings attached to faces are determined by group rules and the current definition of the situation. As Goffman puts it, 'face is something that is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter' (ibid:7).

The concept of face is useful for analysing the lines persons act out in encounters. Sometimes discrediting

information surfaces which leads the person to be 'in wrong face'. Sometimes the person is 'out of face' i.e. unready for the encounter. Some lines may involve snubs, digs and bitchiness, all of which threaten someone's face. But somehow the expressive order of the encounter, i.e. the regulation of interactional events so that they are consistent with the faces of the participants, must be maintained. The means of maintenance is 'face-work' which is designated as those 'actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face' (ibid:2). In particular, face-work counteracts 'incidents', i.e. events which symbolically threaten someone's face. Two basic kinds of face-work are analysed: avoidance practices and corrective practices. The complexities of the aggressive use of face-work and the place of face-work in spoken interaction are considered in detail.

Goffman concludes that 'universal human nature is not a very human thing' (ibid:45). It is to be found not in individuals as such but in the need for every society to 'mobilize their members as self-regulating participants in social encounters' (ibid:44). The ritual requirements articulated by the face-work model provide one means of so mobilizing individuals.

Late in 1954 Goffman took up a post as Visiting Scientist at the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Maryland which permitted the famous fieldwork at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington DC upon which Asylums was based. A

preliminary two month study furnished the illustrative material for the paper, 'The nature of deference and demeanour' (1956) which further explores the ritual elements of face-to-face interaction and specifically those themes deriving from Durkheim's chapter on the soul in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life which Goffman had already identified in the doctoral dissertation (1953) as of central significance for our understanding of the individual as interactant. Goffman examines 'some of the senses in which the person in our urban secular world is allotted a kind of sacredness that is displayed and confirmed by symbolic acts' (1967:47). Ritual is explicitly defined by Goffman as 'a way in which the individual must guard and design the symbolic implications of his acts while in the immediate presence of an object that has a special value to him' (ibid:57) and two important forms of interpersonal ritual, deference and demeanour, are analysed.

Deference is 'that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient of this recipient, or something which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension or agent' (ibid:56). Goffman describes various 'avoidance rituals' (ibid:62ff) evident for example in avoidance of personal or humiliating information or encroaching upon another's personal space, as well as a range of 'presentational rituals' (ibid:71) such as compliments, invitations and the provision of minor services. Demeanour is 'typically conveyed through deportment, dress, and bearing which serves to express to those in his



immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities' (ibid:77). The psychiatric wards Goffman studied provide frequent and sometimes spectacular violations of the customary norms governing deference and demeanour behaviours. Analysis of these departures underscores the significance of deference and demeanour behaviours in society outside the psychiatric ward. In modern society, Goffman concludes, 'many gods have been done away with, but the individual himself stubbornly remains as a deity of considerable importance' (1967:95). Like 'On face-work', 'The nature of deference and demeanor' develops the ritual theme but does so in a more ethnographically precise way, as befits its original place of publication, The American Anthropologist.

In Goffman's doctoral dissertation a leading manifestation of interactional dyshoria was embarrassment. This phenomenon is the topic of his second 1956 paper, 'Embarrassment and social organization'. Embarrassment is described, but not defined, in terms of its objective signs (blushing, stuttering, sweating, etc) and its subjective symptoms (constriction of the diaphragm, a dazed sensation, tenseness of the muscles). As in the dissertation, embarrassment arises when the assumption an interactant has projected about his identity are threatened or discredited by the 'expressive facts' of the situation (1967:107-108). Embarrassment, Goffman argues, is 'located not in the individual but in the social system wherein he has his several selves' (ibid:108). Goffman's treatment of the socially situated nature of embarrassment stands in marked contrast to the

usual psychological assumptions figuring in the analysis of this phenomenon. In this respect it makes an important early contribution to the sociology of the emotions (see, e.g., Kemper, 1981; Shott 1979; Hochschild 1983).

Interactional dysphoria can also be generated when participants are insufficiently involved in the proceedings of the conversational encounter. This is the topic of the 1957 paper 'Alienation from interaction', a paper which is directly prefigured by several chapters in the doctoral dissertation (see especially 'The organization of attention', 'On kinds of exclusion from participation', 'Dual participation' and 'Involvement'. But, like the other publications collected here as postdoctoral articulations, the ideas presented in the dissertation are significantly elaborated.

Conversational encounters require individuals to become spontaneously involved in what is transpiring. Talk is the main focus of attention and that talk creates a 'world', a 'reality' for participants: 'conjoint spontaneous involvement is a unio mystico, a socialized trance' (1967:113). But if the trance is broken, the individual can be described as alienated from the interaction. Goffman describes four such forms of misinvolvement, preoccupation, self consciousness, other consciousness and interaction consciousness, and examines how these misinvolvements are handled. Goffman concludes that spontaneous involvement is an important aspect of the

individual's sense of reality in conversational encounters and if misinvolvement gets out of hand, then participants 'will feel unruled, unreal and anomic' (ibid:135). Any given encounter may be quite inconsequential, but what is of 'transcendent importance' is that individuals assume such involvement obligations, for spoken interaction 'is necessary if society's work is to be done' (ibid:135-136).

The book which brought Goffman fame as a sociologist (and also won him the MacIver Award for 1961 'given to the author of a publication which contributed in an outstanding degree to the progress of sociology in the two preceding years' see ASR, 1961:834; Rose, 1966:45), The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life also belongs to the mid-fifties period of postdoctoral articulations. It is perhaps too well-known to warrant extended treatment here; only a sketch of the analytical framework will be provided. Presentation of Self is sometimes mistakenly regarded as the book of the doctoral dissertation. Whilst it certainly draws upon certain of the central themes of the dissertation, namely the management of self and information about self (although Goffman now prefers to speak of 'presented' rather than 'projected' selves), it uses a dramaturgical metaphor to develop the framework of the earlier work. As noted earlier, the absence of metaphor in the dissertation is striking, especially given Goffman's earlier (1952) demonstrated facility with the technique. However, it might be conjectured that Goffman was already drafting Presentation of Self at the time he was writing his dissertation. This conjecture is based on a generous

interpretation of a single fact: in both 1956 and 1959 editions of the book Howard S. Becker's observation about the problem faced by marihuana users in 'passing' among non-users is reported as contained 'in a forthcoming paper' (Goffman, 1956a:138; Goffman 1959:217). Becker's observation appears in his paper 'Marihuana use and social control' which was originally published in Spring 1953 (see Becker, 1963:vii,69-72).

In the 'Preface' Goffman announces 'the perspective employed in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical ones' (1959;xi). However, the dramaturgical model developed in the seven chapters of the book should be distinguished from the 'necessarily abstract' Introduction which sets out the impression management thesis. This thesis contains a fundamental set of assumptions about the nature of face-to-face interaction (comparable statements are found in some of Goffman's later work; see, eg, 1963a:13-17; 1969:4ff). In the presence of others the individual will endeavour to acquire information about the other's status mood, knowledgeability, attitude etc in order to formulate expectations about the other and thus to define the situation. This information is encoded in 'expressions given' and 'given off' and is used to establish an 'interactional modus vivendi', the 'working consensus'. Regardless of the individual's particular motives, he will attempt to control the impression others have of him. The elaboration of this model (ibid:1-16) comprises the impression management thesis. It is a general

model of interaction which in one shape or another underlies all Goffman's mature work.

The first and longest chapter treats 'all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants' as a performance; its components are carefully dissected in a dramaturgical language of 'personal front', 'appearance', 'manner' and so forth. Sometimes a performance is staged by more than one individual acting in concert with others: this team-work permits escape from the person-centred perspective Goffman has hitherto adopted in the book. The influence on performances of regions, i.e. 'any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception' (ibid:106) is analysed. This is followed by an examination of discrepant roles i.e. those participants who know the secrets of a team and who are in a privileged position to threaten the impression the team fosters. The forms and problems of communication out of character, those 'types of communication... which convey information incompatible with the impression officially maintained during interaction' (ibid:170) make up a fifth chapter. In the arts of impression management Goffman summarises the attributes required of performers for the successful staging of a performance. In the conclusion Goffman indicates the relation of a dramaturgical perspective to other sociological perspectives and indicates some limitations of the model.

Certain continuities between Presentation of Self and Goffman's earlier work are evident in both substance and method. The notion of presentation has its origins in Goffman's examination of projection in the Master's dissertation. The concern with the potential for misrepresentation in performances originates in the 1951 paper which problematicised the spurious display of class status symbols. The ever-present possibility of the discrediting of the self in encounters is a notion first placed on Goffman's analytic agenda in 'On cooling the mark out'. Much is made, of course, of the doctoral dissertation's framework but Presentation is a substantially new work. The descriptive and classificatory method which Goffman had been developing since 1949 receives fresh impetus with the inclusion of a wide range of illustrative material from diverse social settings. These themes, along with the shared period in which they first appeared, allow us to collect together Presentation and the four papers on face, deference and demeanour, embarrassment and alienation from interaction, as postdoctoral articulations of the scheme laid out in 1953. Goffman was to continue his interactional systematics through the publications of the 1960s and early 1970s. However, there is a break provided by the three years spent as Visiting Scientist at NIMH which marks off the later work from the earlier. It is to these later articulations of the interactional systematics which we now turn.

## 2.6.2 Later Articulations

The Presentation of Self is sometimes mistakenly regarded as a contribution to role theory; the relation is clarified by Goffman in his essay 'Role distance' (1961b). Through a careful exposition and critique of traditional role theory Goffman specifies his interest in the 'situated roles' (1961b:96) individuals take in encounters (here labelled 'situated activity systems'). Traditional role theory views a role as the enactment of the expectations associated with a status in one of the society's institutional orders such as the family, work, political life and so forth. But these family roles, work roles, political roles etc do not catch the variety of interactional conduct we routinely witness. Goffman recommends a focus on the situational roles taken by participants in encounters as a more realistic approach to the particularities of social conduct. Sometimes individuals 'embrace' a role, become thoroughly caught up in it. At other times they engage in various kinds of dissociative behaviours which serve to drive a wedge between the individual and the role, to express a 'pointed separateness' which denies the self implied by the role. This Goffman terms 'role distance' (1961b:106-108). Much of the playful and humorous conduct of individuals that we often interpret as signs of their distinctiveness and vitality as unique human beings can be assimilated by the concept of role distance, for what their conduct represents is, sociologically speaking, not evidence of unique individuality but a way in which the individual gives credit to other attachments and

identifications not immediately relevant to the encounter. The concept of role distance is designed to help combat 'this touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology' (ibid:152).

Perhaps the fullest coverage of Goffman's later interactional systematics is contained in Behavior in Public Places (1963a). Goffman introduces the important conceptual trilogy of the 'social situation', the 'social gathering' and the 'social occasion'. These units and the concepts they subtend make an important differentiation of the often indiscriminately-used term, interaction.

The spatial environment in which face-to-face interaction occurs is called the social situation. It is characterised by the 'mutual monitoring possibilities' available to copresent persons. An individual entering this environment is accessible to the 'naked senses' of all those present and he will find them accessible to him in the same way. A social situation arises when two or more people find themselves in each other's physical presence, thereby allowing mutual monitoring of one another; it lapses when the next-to-last participant leaves (1963a:18). The activity occurring within a social situation is partly regulated by certain norms and expectations which are specific to it. This is the 'situational aspect of situated activity' which is contrasted with the 'merely situated aspect of situated activity' (ibid:22). *These latter activities occur within situations, but are of little interest to Goffman because*



they are not of situations. One example cited to illustrate the distinction concerns the activity which occurs in libraries. The situational aspect of library activity includes the rule that individuals must behave in a quiet and decorous manner; merely situated aspects of library activity include the individual's choice of books, his reading skills, and so on. The 'unblushing part of reality' (ibid) which is merely situated lies outside Goffman's remit.

These distinctions are designed to demarcate that aspect of social regulation which obtains under conditions of copresence and is specific to these conditions. Further inroads into this aspect of social regulation is made by the concept, the social gathering, which is defined as the aggregation of individuals found in social situation, no matter how divided or distant or momentarily present they may be. Two polar types of gathering, unfocussed and focussed, are distinguished. The communicative behaviour of copresent persons can be thought of terms of 'two steps'. The first step, unfocused interaction, occurs between who come together to share the same time and space in a social situation, and it consists of that information that is communicated in a glance i.e. those modifications of posture, clothing, facial expression and the like that are made observable simply by virtue of 'sheer and mere copresence' (ibid:24). The second step, focused interaction, takes place when those copresent 'openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention' (ibid:24), as in a conversation, a board game, or a joint task sustained by a close circle of contributors. When

focused interaction occurs in a gathering, Goffman speaks of a 'face engagement'. This term is equivalent to a 'focused gathering', an 'encounter' and a 'situated activity system'.

The third unit Goffman distinguishes is the social occasion, which is easier to illustrate than to crisply and precisely define. The social occasion encompasses social parties, picnics, public political meetings, even diffuse social entities like 'Tuesday afternoon downtown'. His best definition of the social occasion is 'a wider social affair, undertaking or event, bounded in regard to place and time and typically facilitated by fixed equipment; a social occasion provides the structuring social context in which many situations and their gatherings are likely to form, dissolve and re-form, while a pattern of conduct tends to be recognised as the appropriate and (often) official or intended one' (ibid:18). Theoretically, it affords a way of integrating situational conduct into larger social units and it is Goffman's view that 'the regulations of conduct characteristic in situations and their gatherings are largely traceable to the social occasion in which they occur' (ibid:20). At least in principle, the concept of social occasion acts as a bulwark against a situational relativism, serving as a broader context in which situations and their gatherings are embedded, but it remains a concept little used in the specific analyses Goffman conducts.

This trilogy - social situation, gathering and occasion - effects an elegant division of labour for an initial

exploration of the interaction order. The concept of social situation draws attention to the role played by physical conditions (especially spatial conditions) and the individual's physiological capacities in the study of face-to-face interaction. The social gathering concept and its analytical offspring are obviously central to Goffman's studies and most of Behavior in Public Places is given over to the analysis of these basic units. Goffman is also concerned to show how the involvement and activities of situational conduct are regulated by a special class of rules which he terms 'situational proprieties (ibid:24,243) and, as ever, Goffman finds departures from these rules especially instructive (see ch.14 'The symptomatic significance of situational improprieties' 1963a:216-241). He advances the view that situational improprieties are less a matter of personality disorder as they are an expression of alienation from the community, social establishments, social relationships and encounters. He concludes:

'Even a loosely defined social gathering is still a tight little room; there are more doors leading out of it and more psychologically normal reasons for stepping through them than are dreamt of by those who are always loyal to situational society.' (ibid:241)

This passage is typical of Goffman's occasional inclination to move from the role of sociological analyst to that of cultural critic and even moral philosopher. It is one of the attractions of reading Goffman that he is prepared to move from analysing picayune details to wider and grander conclusions about the

nature of human existence. This tendency, most forthrightly evident in his studies of problematic participation frameworks and statuses, represents one aspect of the persuasive power of his writing and is more fully considered in chapter 5.

In the 1963 book Goffman defines the 'public places' of the title as 'any regions in a community freely accessible to members of the community' (ibid:9) but claims that 'no analytical significance' is implied by the useage. What is of interest is 'public order' defined in the restrictive sense of the social orderliness of gatherings. The imprecision of the term 'public' is also evident in Relations in Public (1971) where the study of face-to-face interaction is again somewhat idiosyncratically labelled 'the field of public life' (1971:xi). Whatever quibbles we might have about Goffman's labelling of his chosen area of interest (the term 'the interaction order' used first in the doctoral dissertation and very much later as the title of his posthumously published Presidential Address to the ASA is surely a much more apt description), the fact remains that Relations in Public represents another major foray into the interactional systematics. But, as the 'Author's Note' acknowledges, it is not a monograph: the six chapters of the the book were written to be published together but can be read independently and do not 'cover systematically, exhaustively, and without repetition' (ibid:1) the topic-matter of the book.

The first chapter, 'The individual as a unit', departs from the observation that the individual is an analytically

problematic concept in studies of interaction<sup>and</sup> suggests 'two things an individual can be' (ibid:5): a 'vehicular unit', a shell controlled by a human pilot which encompasses both pedestrians and vehicles as ordinarily understood and a 'participation unit', which is not explicitly defined (but see 1963a:91) but which consists of a subset of the 'single', the unaccompanied person in a public place, and a 'with', the person in the company of one or more others. The various aspects of personal territory are analysed in the next chapter, 'The territories of the self', which is then followed by two important chapters examining how these territories are supported in conversational interaction and how violations to personal territory are remedied. 'Supportive interchanges' investigates the structure of 'access rituals' (chiefly greetings and farewells) whilst 'Remedial interchanges' examines the repair work often done in response to an interactional offence. The fifth chapter, 'Tie signs' looks at the devices that contain evidence of a relationship between persons and the sixth, 'Normal appearances;' considers the taken for granted bases that nothing out of the ordinary is taking place when the individual appears in public. Although not a monograph, Relations in Public has a strong thematic coherence. Its six chapters can be read as falling into three pairs dealing respectively with aspects of the interactant's personal territory, the interactional work done to sustain and protect that territory, and the internal and external aspects of the maintenance of relationships between interactants. Overall, the book strikes a nice balance between the leading

themes of Goffman's sociology: the self (the first two chapters), the ritual theme (the next two chapters) and the informational theme (the last two chapters).

By the late 1960s the unique and thoroughly distinctive analytical perspective which Goffman had developed was widely acknowledged as an important contribution to modern sociology. But there were many commentators who complained of its apparent amorality, who regarded with disdain its seeming preoccupation with deceit, manipulation, gamesmanship and 'Machiavellian' conduct in general. Goffman acquired a notoriety for portraying a world in which overly-rational and self-conscious actors exploited the discrepancy between appearances and reality in a thoroughly self-interested manner. It is questionable whether this reputation was well-founded but it certainly became a significant part of the mythology surrounding Goffman and his sociology. The book published in 1969, Strategic Interaction, tackles the issues of deceit and gamesmanship head-on. Ironically, several reviewers (Carson 1970; Lemert 1972; Taylor 1972) found it one of his duller and less impressive works.

The two papers contained in the book, 'Expression games; an analysis of doubts at play' and 'Strategic interaction', respectively analyse deception and calculation in 'mutual dealings', especially of the face-to-face kind. 'Expression games' explores 'one general human capacity' namely, the capacity to 'acquire, reveal and conceal information' (1969a:4). An observer-subject model is employed to examine the

assessments observers make of subjects and the various possibilities of awareness and mutual awareness of awareness that occur when the subject endeavours to frustrate the observer's assessment. The processes Goffman describes have a contest-like character which is why he terms them 'expression games' (ibid:13). When the ceiling is reached Goffman suggests that 'the degeneration of expression' (ibid:58ff) occurs: the subject's expressions are so overworked for what might be inferred about the subject's intentions that they come to mean nothing. Goffman draws heavily on the espionage literature but claims that expression games are endemic to social situations: 'surely every adult who has had a friend or a spouse has had occasion to doubt expression of relationship and then to doubt the doubt even while giving the other reasons to suspect that something is being doubted' (ibid:81). It is these concerns, Goffman concludes, that make us all a little like espionage agents.

The second essay, 'Strategic interaction' goes beyond issues of assessment of the other's knowledge state to examine the bases of decision making in circumstances that are mutually fateful. In strategic situations one party must gain and the other lose. Each party will make its decision on the basis of what it believes the other party knows, including what it knows that the other knows about its knowledge and likely strategy. The paper is thus an attempt to establish the potential and limits of game theory. Sociologists have as yet to discover that potential, and it must be said that in many respects Strategic

Interaction is Goffman's least successful and most unsatisfactory book. The promised utility of the analytical frameworks is not easy to discern, and inspection of Appendix D confirms this impression: there is a consistently low pattern of citation by other social scientists. Nevertheless, Goffman does return to the themes of deceit and the game-like exploitation of mutual knowledge in his subsequent writings, notably the analysis of fabrications in Frame Analysis (1974).

## 2.7 Frame Analysis

### 2.7.1 Programmatic

The publication of Goffman's magnum opus, Frame Analysis in 1974 marked an important new stage in the development of his sociology. Frame analysis turns away from the behavioural concerns of the interactional systematics to address to an experiential issue: how do individuals make sense of any given 'strip' of activity? A strip is defined as 'any arbitrary slice cut from the stream of ongoing activity' (1974:10) - clearly, a very much more inclusive point of departure than that used to investigate the properties of face-to-face interaction. In principle, any strip can support a number of interpretations, so that what appears to be an exchange of greetings may potentially be a dream, a joke, a misunderstanding, a mistake, a deception and so on. This is a problem which had been popularised in sociology by Schutz's notion of 'multiple realities'. What is central is the problem of how sense is made. Any strip of activity can pose the problem for individuals of 'What is it that



is going on here?' (ibid:8). Frame analysis promotes a sociological understanding of the issues entailed by this problem. The crucial term, 'frame', is borrowed from Bateson, and is defined by Goffman thus: 'I assume that definitions of the situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify' (ibid:10-11). Goffman intends the term 'frame' to refer to a correspondence or isomorphism between an individual's perception and the organisation of the strip he perceives (ibid:26). So, for example, the insult frame organises both an individual's perception and the activity he perceives as an insult. Thus a frame is a phenomenal description of a strip. Frames are social organisational premises about an activity that are sustained both in cognition and in the activity (1974:248). Frame analysis addresses a broader and more fundamental range of issues than the interactional systematics as it is concerned with our experience of the world, not just our conduct in one of its domains, the interaction order.

For Goffman frame analysis grows out of the analysis of situational conduct and is complementary to it. Frame represents an extension of W.I. Thomas's concept of the definition of the situation, which Goffman has long recognised as an important element in the construction of the interaction order. However, there the definition of the situation is seen as a preliminary matter to be settled at the outset of an encounter, and once the

definition has been agreed and a 'working consensus' established, all that is required of participants is that they act in ways that will sustain it. In frame analysis the definitional issue comes to the fore and is analysed in its own right as 'frame' rather than simply treated as part of an interactional pragmatics. However it is in this latter context that the term 'frame' first appears in Goffman's work. In 'Fun in games' (1961b) published some thirteen years prior to Frame Analysis reference is made to the way games place a frame around events, supplying the sense that will be made of all that occurs as the game frame. Here 'transformation rules' and 'rules of irrelevance' effect a frame which specifies what may and may not be attended to in the encounter (1961b:25ff). Passing references to frame are scattered throughout the publications of the 1960s (see, for example, 'Where the action is' 1967 and Strategic Interaction 1969) and, as was noted above, a rudimentary conception of frame is to be found in his Master's dissertation (1949:42). (Incidentally, I believe that the sole reference to Some Characteristics of Response to Depicted Experience in the entire corpus of Goffman's writings is to be found in Frame Analysis page 53n.24.) Another path from the interactional systematics to frame analysis is found in the discussion of the 'realness' of apparently contrived reality in Presentation of Self (eg 1959:70-76). As one issue addressed by frame analysis is how the 'reality' of a frame is maintained it can be seen to take up and amplify some of the questions left hanging by the

dramaturgical model (see esp. 1974:ch.5, 'The theatrical frame' and ch.13 'The frame analysis of talk').

The core of frame analysis rests on the distinctions between three types of frame: the primary framework and two 'transformations' or 'reworkings' of the primary framework: the 'key' and the 'fabrication' (or 'design'). A strip is rendered intelligible by a primary framework. It is primary in that it makes meaningful what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of a strip. Even though these 'interpretive schemas' vary widely in their degree of organisation, 'each primary framework allows its user to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms' (ibid:21). There are two major types of primary framework, natural and social: the latter involving 'deeds' or 'guided doings', the former merely 'events'. Their universality is such that 'we can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now' (ibid:38). The totality of any social group's primary frameworks is its 'cosmology', and thus the elaborate classification of actual primary frameworks is part of the ethnographer's task. Frame analysis as Goffman develops it, by contrast, is not concerned with the empirical content of primary frameworks: the analytical focus falls on the more general issues relating to reworkings of frames and the multifarious vulnerabilities to which they are subject.

Primary frameworks can be transformed into either keys or fabrications, which might be thought of as secondary frameworks, although Goffman does not use this term. Both involve the transformation of some portion of activity which is already intelligible in terms of a primary framework. Thus a strip of activity that is already intelligible as a fight (primary framework) might be keyed if it is reframed as 'playing at fighting' or 'practicing a fight' or 'reporting a fight'. The primary framework serves as a pattern or model for the activity ('fighting'), whereas in actual fact the activity is interpreted as a keyed transformation of the primary framework and seen as 'playing/practicing/reporting a fight'. A key therefore, refers 'the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else' (ibid:43-44). Notice that it is definitive of keyed frames that the participants are aware that the transformation has occurred. According to Goffman (ibid:47-77) the basic keys available 'in our society' are 'make believe' (playful behaviour, day-dreaming, dramatic scriptings), 'contests' (fighting is the principal model for this key), 'ceremonials' (where ordinary conduct is keyed by being invested with special symbolic significance), 'technical redings' (practices, demonstrations, experiments, role playing sessions) and 'regroundings' (where the individual's motives are at variance with the motives customarily associated with the activity).

Just as a novel can be made into a film and a film can be made into a novel, it is clear that transformations of frames can operate in both directions. Any particular keying is reversible. Crime films may establish a language and style for actual criminals; the detailed reporting of a crime may lead to further crimes modelled after the report. More generally, it seems that keyings are subject to rekeying. For example, plays are usually rehearsed, the rehearsal constituting a rekeying of the keyed frame, the theatrical play. The framing complications created by these possibilities can be controlled if successive transformations are thought of as adding 'layers' or 'laminations' to the activity. Any strip can then be described either in terms of its innermost lamination (the keying) or in terms of its outmost lamination, 'the rim of the frame' (ibid:81-82).

The contrasting reworking of a primary framework is the design or fabrication. These frames are generated when individuals induce others to have a false belief about an activity. This realm of con games, hypnosis, secret participant observation and experimental hoaxing is one that Goffman is analytically truly at home in. Fabrications are classified along a benign-exploitative axis. Benign fabrication, which includes playful deceit, practical joking and the like, is not carried out against the mark's interests, whereas exploitative fabrications are patently inimical to his private interests.

These three basic frames - primary frameworks, keys and fabrications - can be ordered in two major alignments. The first alignment relates to the presence or absence of a reworking: untransformed activity framed by primary frameworks, stands on one side, and transformed activity, framed by keys and fabrications, stands on the other. The second alignment relates to accuracy of the participants' conceptions of frame: in activity framed both by primary frameworks and by keyings - 'straight activity' - the participants' frame conceptions are accurate, whereas in activity framed by fabrications the participants' frame conceptions are inaccurate.

This is the basic terminology which is fleshed out by Goffman's more detailed studies of extra-frame activity, the real worldly grounding of frames, frame errors, ambiguities and disputes, and breaks in the applicability of frame. A further tie between frame analysis and the interactional systematics is contained in Goffman's claim that his frame perspective is 'situational', which amounts to 'a concern for what one individual can be alive to at a particular moment, this often involving a few other particular individuals, and not necessarily restricted to the mutually monitored arena of a face-to-face gathering' (ibid:8). The importance of the frame analysis as developed by Goffman is that it presents a sociological method for analysing the various modalities of individual experience - an interest which coincides with aims of phenomenological inquiry, but one that is advanced by Goffman without recourse to the metaphysical baggage of phenomenological reduction. However,

it is also an analytical framework of sufficient generality to permit linkage with more macrosociological concerns (see, for example, the work of Snow et al, 1986).

### 2.7.2 Applications

Frame Analysis itself contains two chapters (5 and 13) in which the analytical tools developed are applied to the theatre and to talk respectively. Chapter 5 opens with a somewhat coy acknowledgement from Goffman that because 'the language of the theater has become deeply embedded in the sociology from which this study derives' (1974:124) there is value in addressing the theatrical frame. Readers might therefore reasonably hope that their misgivings about the dramaturgical model will be dealt with: just how far can the dramaturgical metaphor be pressed in interactional analysis, and in particular, how are we to regard the claim that interaction consists of drama-like 'performances'? Goffman does not provide direct answers to these questions but does discuss two matters that bear upon them: the concept of performance and the differences between staged and unstaged activity.

A 'restricted' definition of performance is now presented as 'that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer' (ibid:124) i.e. someone who can be looked at and scrutinised by an audience without offence being generated. There is an implied contrast with a less 'restricted' definition. One such, from Dell Hymes, is presented in a footnote. This sees performance as 'an attribute of any

behavior, if the doer accepts or has imputed to him responsibility for being evaluated in regard to it'. Hymes' definition resembles Goffman's own from Presentation of Self: 'a performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants' (1959:15).

In Frame Analysis by contrast the concept of performance has been stripped of its metaphorical connotations. This more literal conception permits a distinction between types of performance and enables Goffman to argue that performances vary in terms of their 'purity' i.e. in terms of 'the exclusiveness of the claim of the watchers on the activity they watch' (ibid:125). Scripted drama, ballet and orchestral music, provide examples of pure performances (where the principle of 'no audience, no performance' applies) whilst work performances occurring at construction sites, rehearsals and on-the-spot TV news coverage are given as examples of the impure sort. The circumscribed scope of activities designated as performances stands in marked contrast to the more promiscuous useage of the term in Presentation of Self.

Many critics of Presentation of Self have tried to document the essential differences between the stage and real life in order to query the general applicability of the dramaturgical model. In 'The theatrical frame' Goffman presents his own version of these differences phrased in the terminology of frame analysis. Eight 'transcription practices' are



identified: these are the practices required to transform 'a strip of offstage, real activity into a strip of stage being' (ibid:138). Briefly, they are:

1. A sharp spatial boundary marking off the staged from the unstaged world.
2. The opening up of rooms in order to give audiences access to staged action.
3. A proxemic modification: the spatial alignment of persons 'so that the audience can literally see into the encounter' (ibid:140).
4. The focus of attention falls on one person at a time.
5. 'Turns at talking tend to be respected to the end' (ibid:140).
6. The use of the practice of 'disclosive compensation': audiences are given more information about persons and events on the stage than in everyday life.
7. 'Utterances tend to be much longer and more grandiloquent than in ordinary conversation' (ibid:143).
8. Everything that occurs on the stage has significance for the development of plot or character.

Ordinary activity needs to be keyed through these practices in order to be transformed into theatrical performance. Note the important implication driven home by this discussion. Strips of activity may be understood as similar but they differ in terms of the frame which envelops them. Strips of activity can be transformed in systematic ways by the employment of certain social practices and conventions. Goffman concludes that it is better to speak of these alterations in the meaning of the 'same' behaviour in terms of 'frame function' than to use the appropriate Schutzian term ('motivational relevancies') because

the latter is 'unnecessarily vague' (ibid:148: emphasis in original). This indicates how Goffman agrees that Schutz's work poses interesting problems but considers that his solutions can be improved upon by the conceptual framework of frame analysis.

The dramaturgical theme is also taken up in 'The frame analysis of talk'. Much of ordinary talk consists of storytelling which in Goffman's view has the character of a 'replaying', i.e. 'a tale or anecdote... that recounts a personal experience, not merely reports on an event' (ibid:504). The storyteller has to maintain some suspense to make his tale of interest to the audience. This theme is woven into Goffman's analysis of the properties of talk - the various forms of embedding, speaker roles, connectives, and so on - leading to the conclusion that there are 'deep-seated similarities' (ibid:550) between the theatre's frame structure and that of talk.

Another application of frame analysis is found in the second chapter of Gender Advertisements (1979). 'Picture frames' is a long and convoluted explication of the varying senses in which pictures (and especially advertising photographs) can and cannot be regarded as depictions of some 'real' state of affairs. 'Private' and 'public' pictures are distinguished and 'candid' photographs are differentiated from 'rigged' ones. Goffman draws extensively on the notions of keying and fabrication and concludes that both actual and depicted reality is interpreted in terms of a single viewing and reading competency. Members of society decode lived social reality and various pictorial

representations of it in much the same way, picking out the same socially relevant features. Goffman notes how, particularly in public places in urban settings, the individual lives in a 'glimpsed world' (1979:22). The individual may know little of the biography of strangers encountered on his way, but by paying attention to self-presentational conventions can make reasonable inferences about the category of the other, mood, current undertakings and so forth. These 'glimpsings' provide information which is truncated and abstract but which is quite adequate to the task of dealing with a world of strangers. The same sort of categories that the individual uses to glimpse others and their activities are also used to decode pictures. The sense the reader makes of a picture is parasitic on the reader's wider social competence.

Frame analysis and the concern to explicate the systematics of interaction come together in the essays collected as Forms of Talk (1981). The uniting (if not integration) of these hitherto disparate concerns is indicated by Goffman's Introduction where three themes underlying the papers are identified:

1. the process of ritualisation: '...the moments, looks and vocal sounds we make as an unintended by-product of speaking and listening... (which) in varying degrees acquire a specialized communicative role in the stream of our behavior, looked to and provided for in connection with the displaying of our alignment to current events' (1981:2)
2. participation framework: 'When a word is spoken, all those who happen to be in the perceptual range of the event will have some sort of participation status relative to it' (ibid:3)

3. embedding capacity: the capacity of our talk to be complexly other-or self-referential, as in the example 'To the best of my recollection I think I said I once lived that sort of life' (ibid:149)

In 'Replies and responses' Goffman seeks to replace the narrow statement-reply format (which he identifies with conversation analysis) with a broader and more open 'reference-response' model. 'Response cries' makes a case for treating certain terms of 'self-talk' such as 'Oops' or 'Shit!' as responsive to the actor's dramaturgical concerns. 'Footing' explicates the various changes in alignment to events made by conversationalists. 'The lecture' exemplifies certain themes of the previous three papers, especially the lecturer's opportunities for changes in footing. 'Radio Talk' is an extensive study of the remedial work that radio announcers carry out on their own speech. The concern with the analysis of talk is also evident in Goffman's last publication, 'Felicity's condition' (1983b), a study presupposition and inference in conversation.

Goffman's last works, then, give detailed attention to the minutiae of conversational interaction, the central topic of his doctoral dissertation, but they do so from the vantage of the deepening of his sociological perspective provided by frame analysis.

## 2.8 Problematic Participation Statuses and Frameworks

Goffman's studies of mental illness, the social processes of stigmatisation and genderisms represent empirically

more localised investigations that are often situated within sociology's conventional substantive fields. They are studies of clearly differentiated social roles but are not 'case-studies' as the term is usually understood. Goffman is never content to simply analyse the specifics of the populations chosen for investigation; he constantly endeavours to point up the general interactional features and processes they exemplify. As has already been noted, (above, section 2.3) Goffman early appreciated the power of 'extraordinary events to open our eyes to what ordinarily occurs' (1953:360). This provides the theoretical rationale for the studies of mental patients, the stigmatised and women, which are all studies of social groupings which have deviant, disadvantaged or minority group status. Goffman's interest, as ever, is in the interactional manifestations of their excluded status but he consistently attempts to draw more general conclusions from their particular situations. In an early statement Goffman praises the then-recent tendency of sociologists 'to look into the psychiatric world simply to learn what there could be learned about the general processes of social life' (1957e:201) in contrast to the earlier tendency of sociologists to play at 'junior psychiatry'. In Stigma Goffman ransacks the traditional fields of social problems, social deviance, criminology and race relations in order to develop a 'coherent analytic perspective' on the situation of the stigmatised and concludes that these traditional substantive fields may have a 'now purely historic and fortuitous unity' (1963b:147). His studies of women refuse to recognise

that they constitute a distinct analytic category for sociological analysis; instead, his investigations fall under the aegis of 'genderism', a 'sex-class linked behavioral practice' (1977: 305). Moreover, these studies do not simply apply the interactional systematics and frame analysis but rather represent definite attempts to further develop and articulate Goffman's analytical frameworks; in turn, they feed back into the interactional systematics and frame analysis, as Goffman's frequent references to mental patients and women in his writings classified under those headings indicates. Thus, the broad argument of this section is that each of the main problematic participation statuses and frameworks Goffman analyses has been strategically chosen to illuminate certain general features of the interactional systematics: the mental patient for spectacularly failing to abide by situational properties; the stigmatised highlight the locality and specificity of expectations about normality; whilst gender constitutes the most fundamental code about our presumed human nature.

#### 2.8.1 Problematic Participation Statuses and Frameworks Arising from Mental Illness

Asylums, Goffman's study of 'mental patients and other inmates', is probably his best-known book to audiences outside of academic sociology and is certainly his most widely-quoted work (see Appendix D). The ethnographic fieldwork on which it is based was carried out over a period of twelve months between 1955-1956 at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC which at

the time of Goffman's research had a patient population in excess of 7000. (For a discussion of how St. Elizabeth's has changed since Goffman's day, see Peele et al, 1977.) Goffman's stated aim was 'to learn about the social world of the hospital inmate, as this world is subjectively experienced by him' (1961a:ix). Asylums opens with a classic rationale for participation observation:

'It was then and still is my belief that any group of persons-prisoners, primitives, pilots, or patients - develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get close to it, and that a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject.' (ibid:ix-x)

The four essays which make up the book are richly informed by Goffman's research experiences, but Asylums is not simply an ethnography of St. Elizabeth's and in each essay Goffman is seeking ways of moving beyond the particularities of the hospital he investigated. The first essay 'On the characteristics of total institutions' sets the stage for what is to follow. Its theme is that the mental patient can be regarded as one type of 'inmate' and the mental hospital as one type of 'total institution'. Light is shed on the mental patient's situation by comparing it with other types of inmate and total institution. The ethnographic detail of the patient's situation at St. Elizabeth's comes to the fore in the middle two essays. A diachronic perspective is adopted in the second essay 'The moral career of the mental patient' in order to analyse the changing

nature of the patient's self on the journey towards, and after admission to the mental hospital. An analysis of the social bond informs the perspective taken by the third and longest essay, 'The underlife of a public institution', which shows the myriad ways in which the patient attempts to free himself from the hospital's conception of his nature. The generality of the first essay is matched by the final one, 'The medical model and mental illness' which presents a critical analysis of the applicability of the medical model for understanding the hospitalisation of mental patients. Goffman addresses the impact of the medical model, considered as a staff ideology, on the redefinition of the patient's self. Thus Asylums opens with an organisational analysis and closes with an ideological one; sandwiched in between there is a diachronic and a synchronic ethnographic analysis. If read this way, Asylums can be said to possess an (unacknowledged) internal coherence.

The book's arguments are too well-known to require more than a sketch in the present context. Goffman's view of the mental hospital builds on Howard Rowland's (1939) work on 'segregated communities' and like Rowland Goffman emphasises resocialisation and adjustment processes. The total institution, defined by Goffman as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (1961:xiii), has 'encompassing tendencies' sufficient to effect a radical redefinition of these individuals. Although Goffman does devote space to the 'staff



world' and 'institutional ceremonies', the longest part of his analysis describes the 'inmate world' (ibid:12-74). Goffman draws attention to the various mortification processes which inmates are subjected to, which may involve abasements, degradations, humiliations and 'profanations of self', or which may be more covert in nature, effectively disrupting the usual relationship between the individual and his acts. The self is 'mortified'. Personal reorganisation is accomplished through the institution's privilege system. Total institutions are not always wholly successful in their resocialisation efforts: there may be individual lines of adaptation, and an 'inmate culture' rich in 'secondary adjustments' may proliferate.

In 'The moral career of the mental patient' the mental patient is defined in 'one strictly sociological sense' as someone who has been admitted for treatment to a mental hospital. Entry to mental hospital is socially fateful for whosoever enters as a patient. Excluded from consideration are those who do not 'get caught up in the heavy machinery of mental-hospital servicing' (ibid:129), such as 'undiscovered candidates' for an insanity judgement and those undergoing private psychotherapy outside a hospital. The patient's 'sick behavior' Goffman argues, 'is not primarily a product of mental illness' but is rather a product of his social distance from his immediate situation (ibid:130). The patient's path from his home world to the mental hospital and back to civil society is understood as a 'moral career'. The concept of career is generalised beyond its usual occupational sense to include 'any strand of a person's

course through life'. In speaking of a person's moral career, Goffman addresses 'the regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person's self and his framework for judging himself and others' (ibid:128). The concept of career allows the sociologist to make 'a relatively objective tracing of relatively subjective matters' (ibid:168).

Pre-patient and inpatient phases are analysed. The 'social beginning' of the patient's career is a record of some improper item of his face-to-face conduct with others having been taken exception to by a 'complainant'. From the patient's point of view he finds himself part of an 'alienative coalition' with the complainant, his next-of-relation, and 'mediators' (psychiatrists, police, lawyers, social workers) who, it seems to him, collectively conspire to assure his hospitalisation. To the patient these significant others comprise a 'betrayal funnel'. Once hospitalised the patient may in retrospect feel that, as far as the events leading up to his hospitalisation were concerned, 'everyone's current comfort was being busily sustained while his long-range welfare was being undermined' (ibid:141). At first the patient may be unwilling to acknowledge his newly acquired patient status, but a series of 'mortification processes' succeed in disposing of many of his previous self-conceptions. He comes to terms with the 'privilege system' and the 'ward system' in time, and although he may resist the implications of these arrangements for his self, the balance is always tipped in staff's favour. Eventually the patient becomes demoralised and,

for a time, practices 'the amoral arts of shamelessness' (ibid:169).

The third, longest and most ethnographically detailed essay in Asylums is aptly subtitled 'a study of ways of making out in a mental hospital'. In it Goffman describes a range of 'secondary adjustments' (ibid:189) which enable mental patients to 'get by' in their day-to-day lives at St. Elizabeth's: their 'make-do's', their scavenging, their exploitation of outside contacts, their activities in 'free places', their 'stashes' are exquisitely described, but mention is made of the prostitution, money-lending, racketeering and blackmail that also figure in the patients' underlife. Goffman's broader theme, however, is the nature of the social bond. With any social bond there is a conception of the person who fulfills the obligations of that bond. But individuals do not simply and always meet these obligations. Goffman's general view is that everyone - including mental patients - has some means of holding off all the self-defining implications of a social bond. Secondary adjustments by mental patients are an instance of a more general process whereby the individual employs 'methods to keep some distance, some elbow room, between himself and that which others assume he should be identified' (ibid:319). 'Underlife', then, is an ethnography of role-distancing behaviours.

The final essay explores the professional ideology of institutional psychiatry. Goffman queries the validity of the medical model of mental illness in settings like St. Elizabeth's

by proposing that the model of expert servicing which informs the profession of psychiatry is out of step with custodial functions of public mental institutions. Goffman concludes:

'The limited applicability of the medical model to mental hospitals brings together a doctor who cannot easily afford to construe his activity in other than medical terms and a patient who may well feel he must fight and hate his keepers if any sense is to be made of the hardship he is undergoing. Mental hospitals institutionalize a kind of grotesque of the service relationship.' (1961a:369)

The central vicissitude facing the psychiatrist is that he has custodial as well as medical responsibilities and powers, and the former compromises the latter.

From the Asylums research Goffman derived the view that mental symptoms were best seen as part of the class of behaviours he designated as 'situational improprieties' (1964a/1967:147). One of Goffman's controversial arguments in Asylums is that what is seen psychiatrically as a 'mental symptom' can be seen sociologically as a method of expressing distance and disdain for the current circumstances (cf. the celebrated study by Rosenhan, 1973). In Goffman's own words:

'If you rob people of all customary means of expressing anger and alienation and put them in a place where they have never had better reason for these feelings, then the natural recourse will be to seize on what remains - situational improprieties.' (1967:147)

But what of the situation of those who are not yet incarcerated in a total institution? Whilst the 'pre-patient' phase of 'Moral

career' addressed this issue, the somewhat neglected 'The insanity of place' (1971) presents Goffman's most considerable sociological appraisal of the nature of mental illness.

Mental symptoms are seen as a special sub-set of situational improprieties. They are undisguised, repeated and apparently thoroughly wilful, 'specifically and pointedly offensive' (1971:356). They are the work of people who refuse to keep their social place as their significant others see it. The mentally ill individual is, through these improprieties, claiming a place and an identity that is not rightfully his claim. And in so doing the individual creates 'havoc' for all around him (the havoc created in the family is a special concern of Goffman's essay). These situational improprieties are evidence of an incapacity to meet the social obligations normally binding on the individual to keep his place. Thus, Goffman views mental illness not as an attribute of brain malfunctioning by the ill person, nor does he see it (as do labelling theorists; see Scheff, 1966) as simply embodied in the reactions of others. Mental illness is founded in troubled relationships between people, within the disruption of the webs and obligations that ordinarily serve to tie them together in a stable and routine manner. The ill person's psychological state may have an organic basis, but it just as easily may not and it is the diversity of sources of mental symptoms that makes the psychiatrist's job so difficult and so frequently unsuccessful (1971:387-389). However, a uniform treatment of mental symptoms can be obtained by regarding them as

situational improprieties, the meanings of which need to be seen in the interactional and relational contexts of the individual's life.

#### 2.8.2 Problematic Participation Statuses and Frameworks Arising From Stigmatization

Stigma is in one sense a postscript to 'The moral career of the mental patient' which takes up the 'ex-patient phase' announced but not discussed in that paper. In Stigma Goffman is not content just to analyse the ex-mental patient's predicament but rather seeks to connect it with others in a similar situation: the disfigured and physically handicapped, the deaf and the blind, the ex-convict, ex-alcoholic and ex-addict, the member of an ethnic minority and so on. All these persons frequently find themselves in situations where they are stigmatised i.e. 'disqualified from full social acceptance' (1963b: Preface). Although a stigma is defined by Goffman as a 'deeply discrediting attribute', he insists that the sociological study of stigma demands 'a language of relationships, not attributes' (ibid:3) since what will count as a stigma is sensitive to local contexts (the worries of a professional criminal about being seen entering a library are quoted by Goffman as an example of just how varied stigmatizing attributes can be).

Stigma has an impressive conceptual architecture turning around these notions of identity and their associated social processes. Examination of the broad processes of

stigmatisation is facilitated by the concept of 'social identity', the category and attributes of a person that are available to us on first appearances. The concept is further differentiated into 'virtual social identity', the categorisation we make 'in effect' about people, a supposition which is distinguished from 'actual social identity', the category and attributes a person could be proved to possess (ibid:2). Since a stigma is a failing or shortcoming, it constitutes a special case of a discrepancy occurring between a person's virtual and actual social identity. Obviously, some stigmatic attributes can be concealed and this gives rise to two classes of possessor: the 'discredited', the stigmatised who can assume that their stigma is evident in any encounter with 'normals', and the 'discreditable', whose stigma is not observable or otherwise available (ibid:4). The social identity of the discredited is Goffman's first concern. The management of tension is their basic interactional problem, and an understanding of this process is advanced by concepts of 'sympathetic others' (the 'wise'), 'courtesy stigma' and 'moral career'.

Goffman's attention then turns to the discreditable. As their stigma is not immediately apparent, to control the flow of information about it is their basic interactional problem. Central to an appreciation of this process is the individual's 'personal identity' (ibid:56), the sense of uniqueness we develop about an individual through a knowledge of his life history and the 'identity pegs' and 'positive marks' associated with him. The concepts of 'visibility', 'biography', 'passing' and

'covering' figure large in Goffman's analysis of the processes of information control.

'Ego' or 'felt identity' is 'the subject sense of his own situation and own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences' (ibid:105). This concept facilitates analysis of what the individual feels about his stigma, its management, and the advice he is given regarding these matters. Some 'ambivalence' towards other, like-situated persons is common, as is the tendency towards the development of 'professional presentations' to handle such ambivalence. Additionally, the individual may be torn between 'in-group' and 'out-group alignments' the pulls of each producing a conflict of possible ego identities; thus, a 'politics of identity' may be involved (ibid:112-125).

*Goffman's emphasis throughout is on the interactional* roles of normal and stigmatised. Certain persons may play the latter role more frequently than others, but all of us at some time or other find ourselves in that situation. As such Goffman provides not simply a telling exemplification of one theme of his sociology, control of information about self, but convincing testimony of the capacity of his interactional analysis to illuminate the intricacies of human difference.



### 2.8.3 Problematic Participation Statuses and Frameworks Arising From Genderisms

Much the same kind of observation could be made about Goffman's work (1976/1977 /1979) on 'genderisms' (which will be treated at greater length in the next chapter). Goffman, as it were, rides on the bandwagon of feminism which from the late 1960s on placed the situation, and especially the disadvantages, faced by women on the agenda of numerous academic disciplines in the arts and human sciences. As Gonos (1980:168n.52) observes, there is to be found 'a low burning feminism' throughout Goffman's writings. Or perhaps more accurately, there is not so much a feminism as an awareness of how women's gender can generate special difficulties in interaction; that being a woman can be a problematic participation status. Goffman also demonstrates an awareness of the constraint his own gender may have placed on his observational work. It is only over the past decade or so that sociological ethnographers have become sensitised to the significance of gender in field research' (Wax, 1979; Warren, 1988). How many sociological ethnographers writing in 1961 issued a disclaimer like Goffman's in the 'Preface' to Asylums: 'I want to warn that my view is probably too much that of a middle-class male' (1961:x)?

However feminism's influence on Goffman's writings is more suggestive than directive: 'as usual in recent years' he writes in 'The arrangement between the sexes', his most

forthright and general statement on gender, 'we have had to rely on the discontented to remind us of our subject matter' (1977 :301). Goffman's approach to gender relations is to address them in interactional terms. Small wonder, then, that the reception from feminists was less than enthusiastic (see, e.g. Wedel 1978; Rosenblum, 1980). Feminists made much of the facts of women's disadvantage. Goffman's response was to note that 'the sociologically interesting thing about a disadvantaged category is not the painfulness of the disadvantage, but the bearing of the social structure on its generation and stability' (1977 :307). Furthermore, those feminists who were interested in social structure were largely interested in the analysis of the macro-structures that made patriarchal relations the historical norm. In contrast Goffman's conception of social structure is ahistorically located in interactional practices. But Goffman's central argument is that it is in these practices, and only there, that the widely-assumed 'essential' difference in the natures of men and women is to be located: in the practices of interaction and the beliefs informing them. There is then a radical contingency about Goffman's analysis of the sources of gender difference which is rather more congenial to feminist concerns than some critics have appreciated, for he emphasises the thoroughly socially-constructed nature of gender difference and holds that, at least in modern societies, alternative organisational arrangements could be readily found.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide a basis for reading Goffman's diverse writings as a single whole that can appropriately be labelled 'Goffman's sociology'. There is a unity of purpose which can be traced from his earliest writings which sensitised him to the discrepancies that may exist between symbols and the reality they symbolise. This idea is first given explicit treatment in 'Symbols of class status' and is generalised in the doctoral dissertation and all his later writings. No doubt the interest in class status symbolism arose from his fieldwork with Hyde Park's middle class wives, but Goffman then went on to suggest that the specious display of symbols, particularly as they pertain to the self's presentations in face-to-face conduct, is a general feature of social life. In a similar manner Goffman's abiding interest in the forms of self presentation can be traced back to the Master's dissertation.

This chapter has also made a modest proposal for the classification of Goffman's writings intended to bring some order into what often appears to many readers to be a disparate collection of variations on selected themes. The classification is intended to reduce the confusion engendered by the disparate appearance by revealing the connections and continuities between Goffman's writings. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there are difficulties in unambiguously classifying particular works: 'The interaction order', for example, could just as easily fall under the 'analytical and methodological considerations'

heading as 'interactional systematics'; the essay 'Where the action is' is even more difficult to classify in the schema presented here: it could just as easily be classified under 'frame analysis' or 'problematic participation frameworks and statuses' than 'interactional systematics'. Such, however, are the vicissitudes of classification. Whatever the shortcomings of the classification schema presented here, it does have the merit of identifying some of the bases that allow us to regard Goffman's oeuvre as a single whole.

## CHAPTER 3

## 'ELECTIVE AFFINITIES'?

3.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have attempted to provide a sympathetic account of the emergence and development of Simmel's and Goffman's sociologies. For Simmel, sociology was very much a mid-life preoccupation. He ended, where he began, in the discipline of philosophy, confident that he had accomplished all he was capable of contributing to sociology. In contrast Goffman was a life-long sociologist and although he, like Simmel, died at the age of sixty, there is an air of 'unfinished business' about the corpus of his writings. No doubt had he lived longer the sociological public would probably have been treated to 'more of the same'. There are few signs that he was contemplating any synoptic ordering of his life's work and indeed it was argued in chapter two that his chosen method of working was to move from one analytic problem and conceptual framework to the next without any overall cumulative ambition of establishing a general theory of face-to-face interaction. Systematic intent is evident in any given piece of Goffman's writing, but the whole collection of writings is not designed or executed in a manner likely to lend to the creation of a system. Between 1894 and 1908 especially Simmel worked on and refined a series of analyses of forms of sociation, but a system was not the result (although Frisby 1984:126 does suggest that Simmel nurtured the hope - never to be

realised - of writing a comprehensive sociology of time, space and number).

Inspection of the bibliographies of the two reveals one further point of contrast: Goffman's publications have a more discrete and self-contained character than Simmel's. The latter was continuously reformulating and developing his ideas, never quite achieving the desired perfection which forever lay just over the horizon. Goffman's stance towards his writing was altogether more pragmatic: he seemed able to concentrate on one project at a time, write it up and proceed to the next without anguishing over its shortcomings. After all, there was always another paper or book in which these could be remedied. It is for that reason that we do not find obviously reworked articles and second editions of books, with their second thoughts and modifications, in Goffman's writings (cf. Appendix E). He is content to allow each of his publications to stand as current statements of his thinking (hence one reason for his preferred description of his books as 'reports'), not to be gainsaid by anything subsequently published.

The task of developing a Simmelian reading of Goffman commences in this chapter with a comparison of overlapping substantive topics and themes. The obvious place to begin such a comparison is to pose a simple empirical question: which of Simmel's writings does Goffman choose to refer to in his work? The chapter then considers certain affinities and divergences in the substance of their sociologies. Sections 3.3 to 3.6 compare

TABLE 2

## GOFFMAN'S REFERENCES TO SIMMEL

<u>Goffman reference</u>	<u>Simmel source</u>
1. 'Symbols of class status' (1951)	'Fashion' (1904)
2. <u>Communication Conduct ...</u> (1953)	Microscopic focus (1950:9-10)
3. " "	'Discretion' (1950:323)
4. " "	'Sociability' (1950:45)
5. " "	'Silence' (1950:349n)
6. " "	'Sociability' (no ref.)
7. " "	'Knowledge of one another' (1950:307)
8. " "	'Discretion' (1950: 320-321)
9. 'On face-work' (1955)	" "
10. 'Deference and demeanor' (1956)	" (1950:321)
11. " "	" (1950:322)
12. <u>Presentation of Self</u> (1959)	<i>Allusion to formal method</i>
13. " "	'Discretion' (1950:321)
14. Encounters (1961)	'Sociability' (1950:45-6;49;48-9)
15. " "	" (1950:46)
16. <u>Behavior in Public Places</u> (1963)	'Honor, morality and law' {unpublished}
17. " "	'Sociology of the senses'(1924:358)
18. 'Where the action is' (1967)	'The adventure' (no ref.)
19. <u>Relations in Public</u> (1971)	Allusion to Simmel's analytical style
20. " "	'Honor, morality and law' (unpublished)
21. <u>Frame Analysis</u> (1974)	'The handle' (1959/1965:267)

TABLE 3

## FREQUENCY COUNT OF SIMMEL SOURCES CITED BY GOFFMAN

<u>Simmel source</u>	<u>No. of citations by Goffman</u>
'Discretion'	6
'Sociability'	4
'Honor, morality and law'	2
Formal method/analytical style	2
'The adventure'	1
'Fashion'	1
'The handle'	1
'Knowledge of one another'	1
Microscopic focus	1
'Sociology of the senses'	1
'Silence'	1
Total	21



and contrast certain topics in which there is an ostensible substantive overlap or elective affinity between Simmel and Goffman. Some tentative conclusions about these overlaps are presented in the last section.

### 3.2 Recognition of Simmel in Goffman's Writings

How frequently is Simmel cited by Goffman, and what aspects of Simmel's work are referred to in those citations? Tables 2 and 3 are based upon the information contained in Appendix B, 'A citation count and inventory of references to Simmel in Goffman's writings' and present a summary answer to these questions. Table 2 shows a pattern of early citation of Simmel which falls off in the later publications. Fully one-third (7 out of a total of 21) of the Simmel citations are to be found in Goffman's doctoral dissertation. Moreover, the same references to Simmel occur in the 1956 edition of Presentation of Self as in the subsequent editions, so that nearly two-thirds of the total (13 of 21) appear by 1956. In other words, the majority of citations occur in the doctoral dissertation and the writings classified as postdoctoral articulations of the interactional systematics.

Consequently it comes as no surprise that the largest single source of Simmel's work which Goffman cites is Kurt Wolff's major collection, The Sociology of Georg Simmel (1950). This was the first book-length English translation of Simmel, although of course a number of his papers had been translated into English at the turn of the century. Most of these papers

appeared in the American Journal of Sociology but some pieces were published elsewhere and it is noteworthy that Goffman cites one of these, the 1904 translation of 'Fashion'. That, along with the two references of E.C. Hughes' unpublished translation of 'Honor, morality and law' (items 16 and 20 in Table 2) and the reference to Simmel's somewhat obscure 'The handle' (item 21) is suggestive of a deep acquaintance on Goffman's part with the then-available English translations of Simmel.

However if Goffman did possess such a deep acquaintance - and there is little doubt that Simmel's work was an important component of the Zeitgeist of post-war Chicago sociology - it must be admitted that the range of this acquaintance does not reveal itself in the published references. As Table 3 shows, Goffman found Simmel's four pages on discretion particularly quotable. Simmel's notion of the 'ideal sphere' and the idea that discretion principally involves staying away from personal knowledge that the other does not expressly disclose are seen as central features of the situational proprieties.

Table 3 also shows that Simmel's essay on sociability is the next most frequently cited source. It is also the only piece from Simmel that Goffman takes issue with, and it must be said that Goffman's reading of Simmel does not always show an awareness of the subtlety of Simmel's arguments. In 'Fun in Games' (Encounters, 1961) Goffman notes Simmel's suggestion that during encounters of 'pure sociability' (Goffman provides the inverted commas, but the phrase does not appear in the

translation of Simmel cited, although the sense certainly does) participants suppress their subjective desires and objective attributes (wealth, social position, exceptional talents and so forth). Goffman, in a throw-away line, goes on to complain of 'Simmel's embarrassing effort to treat sociability as a type of "mere" play, sharply cut off from the entanglements of serious life' (1961:21). A few lines later, discussing bureaucratic administration, Goffman suggests in regard to both Weber's thoughts on this topic and Simmel's on sociability, that 'we accept as a tendency that is stated in fact' (ibid). Three points can be made here. The first is that both Simmel and Weber are discussing 'ideal types', i.e. a construction of the analyst that deliberately exaggerates features of reality, and these are certainly not 'statements of fact' in any simple sense. The second is that Simmel in his discussion of sociability is presenting not just an analyst's abstraction; he also recognises that the suppression of objective attributes and subjective desires required for successful sociability is a pervasive social belief. Simmel argues that the world generated by sociability is 'artificial'. In the following passage, note how Simmel shifts from description to criticism of the beliefs he describes:

'It is composed of individuals who have no other desire than to create wholly pure interaction with others which is not disbalanced by a stress of anything material. We may have the erroneous notion that we enter sociability purely "as men", as what we really are, without all the burdens, conflicts, all the too-much and too-little which in actual life disturb the purity of our images. We may get this notion because modern life is overburdened with objective contents and exigencies. And forgetting these daily encumbrances at a social gathering, we fancy ourselves

to return to our natural-personal existence.' (1950:48; emphasis added)

Indeed Simmel recognises 'the actual entanglement of sociability with the events of real life' (1950:49) and Goffman appears to have paraphrased this point in order to make his criticism of Simmel! When that entanglement occurs, the upper or lower 'sociability thresholds' that hold objective attributes and subjective desires at bay have been exceeded, and sociable interaction becomes 'a deceptive lie' (ibid:49). Thus the ideal type of sociability that Simmel sketches is something that he argues may be only very occasionally realised, and Simmel has no need of Goffman to inform him that it is a tendency he describes, for the sense is clearly evident in Simmel's text. Thirdly, Simmel recognises that 'serious' matters can become part of the topic of sociable conversation, which is not composed of 'indifferent' matters but which, contrariwise, 'must be interesting, fascinating, even important' (1950:52). In sum, Goffman hypostatizes the 'merely playful' in Simmel's characterisation of sociable interaction and underestimates Simmel's clear recognition of the dynamism and fluidity of this kind of interaction.

There are obvious difficulties in making too much of the information contained in Tables 2 and 3. In Goffman's case citations are not a reliable guide to relevant influences, by Simmel or anyone else. However, the information does provide a useful initial orientation and does have the utility of rendering

the notoriously slippery notion of 'influence' in empirical terms; but more than these empirical terms are required if we are to appreciate the patently diffuse impact of Simmel on Goffman's work. In the following sections four points of potential influence and substantive comparison are examined and in at least one case, gender relations, it must be admitted that any kind of empirical influence emanating from Simmel appears exceedingly unlikely (this is because Simmel's essays on women were only translated into English in 1984; there remains the possibility that Goffman was familiar with the German originals, or that he was influenced by Simmel's remarks on women scattered throughout his other writings). In any case, the focus of this thesis is on convergences and divergences between two bodies of thought. Empirical notions of influence are of interest but do not stand as a test of the adequacy of the similarities and differences noted. Notwithstanding this proviso, the comparison of substantive affinities will commence with a comparison of Simmel's ideas concerning knowledge of the other (from the chapter on secrecy in which the analysis of discretion is located; see section 1.6.7 above) and Goffman's related views on information about self.

### 3.3 Knowledge of Others and Information About Self

Goffman (1953:300-301) very appropriately cites Simmel's observation that 'the first condition of having to deal with somebody at all is to know with whom one has to deal' (1950:307) in support of his contention that orderly interaction

can only proceed if an initial social identification of the other has taken place. Simmel also recognises that 'reciprocal' or 'mutual knowledge' is called for in any social dealings and that we form a picture of the others, a sense of his 'personal unity', out of the 'fragments' which are accessible to us. This personal unity 'depends upon the portion of him which our standpoint permits us to see' (ibid:308) and Simmel emphasises the frequent inequality in the reciprocal knowledge possessed by individuals. This derives from certain distinctive properties of the individual as an object of knowledge. We can never fully know the 'inner life of the individual with whom we interact' (ibid:310); indeed, if we could it 'would drive everybody into the insane asylum' (ibid:314). All we ever have access to are 'fragments' of the other's inner life, a 'transformation of this inner reality, teleologically directed, reduced and recomposed' (ibid). Individuals thus modify their behaviour, arranging, selecting and stylising the inner reality to suit the purposes at hand. A 'teleologically determined non-knowledge of one another' is thus an 'intrinsic, a priori and (as it were) absolute presupposition' (ibid) of any interaction and social relation.

These ideas are consonant with Goffman's own impression management thesis and its subsequent refinements (see esp. 1963a:13-17; 1969a:4-11). Goffman develops Simmel's thoughts by restricting them to the domain of face-to-face interaction. In our encounters with others we have good practical reasons for acquiring information about the status, mood, knowledgeability, and orientation towards us of the individuals we meet. Goffman is

more precise than Simmel about the location of this information: we find it in the impression others 'give' (through talk) and 'give off' or 'exude' (through posture, dress, facial expression and so on). Goffman, like Simmel, recognises that this information is likely to be discontinuous with the individual's inner reality and insists that the process is quite fundamental to all face-to-face interaction. Goffman also draws attention to what might be called the witness's or recipient's advantage: the recipient is able to audit both expressions given and given off, whereas the sender of expressive information is usually only involved in expressions given (1959:7). Indeed, Goffman cites Simmel's observation that 'all of human intercourse rests on the fact that everybody knows somewhat more about the other than the other voluntarily reveals to him' (1950:323) in his first formulation of recipient advantage (1953:81). Goffman goes a little further than Simmel, however, in refining the latter's observation (1950:310) that individuals modify their behaviour in view of their awareness that it will be recognised by others in proposing that the individual will organise his expressive behaviour in a way designed to exert control over how others will respond to him (1959:3).

Simmel develops his argument that a 'teleologically determined non-knowledge of one another' is an absolute presupposition of any social interaction and relationship to suggest that all relationships 'presuppose a certain ignorance and measure of mutual concealment' (1950:315). The suggestion appears to be transposed into the interactional domain by Goffman

who argues that recipient's advantage gives rise to the possibility of conversational interaction consisting of 'a constant game of concealment and search' (1953:84). When the individual makes attempts to redress the asymmetry of recipient's advantage, the stage is set 'for a kind of information game - a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery' (1959:8).

Thus it comes as no surprise to find that both Simmel and Goffman regard lying and deceit as simply an extreme pole of a more general social process. Simmel maintains 'in regard to the elementary sociological fact at issue here - the restriction of the knowledge of one about the other - it must be remembered that the lie is only one among all possible available means' and whilst Simmel's analysis is more sharply sensitised to the 'ethically negative value' of the lie, he does concede that it has a positive sociological significance for the formation of certain social relationships (1950:316). Goffman's analysis is rather more subversive of conventional morality. He proposes that deceit is the linguistic version of interactionally-conveyed misinformation whilst feigning is its expressive form (1953:75; 1959:2). Goffman goes on to argue that the central sociological consideration in analysing the impressions fostered in everyday performances is not whether they are true or false but whether they can be disrupted or discredited (1959:58-66).

From the foregoing we can see that Goffman takes up several of Simmel's arguments about mutual knowledge but re-casts



and develops them in accordance with his avowed aim to develop the study of face-to-face interaction as a sub-area of sociology. Whereas Simmel's analysis is somewhat loosely centred on interaction and social relationship, Goffman is much more closely attuned to the contingencies that interaction imposes on mutual knowledge. More specifically, Goffman has a theory of the basic communicative processes of face-to-face interaction (the impression management thesis) which Simmel, for all his insight into those processes, lacks. It is perhaps for this reason that there is an absence of reference to Simmel's chapter on secrecy when Goffman presents his own typology of secrets (1959:141-144), for Goffman's discussion is closely tied to the function of secrecy for the successful staging and management of interactional performances.

#### 3.4 The Dramatic Actor and Dramaturgy

A large manuscript on dramatic acting was found among Simmel's papers after his death. Gertrud Kantorowicz was given the keeping of the manuscript, which she was editing for publication, but it was stolen from her during a train journey in Italy in the 1920s (Laurence, 1975:40). All that now remains are two articles, translated as 'The dramatic actor and reality' (1968; original 1912) and 'On the theory of theatrical performance' (1973; original 1908). Both papers examine, with some repetition, the role of the stage actor.

Simmel stresses that the role of the actor is just that, a role which is expressed on a stage. What is shown on the

stage is not a whole person, but 'a complex of things that can be said about a person through literary devices' (1968:92). The actor does not reproduce reality of a person in a given situation nor does the actor merely animate a script; rather the actor moulds elements of both into a unity that is sensually expressed as an autonomous artistic form. Simmel's contention is summed up in an axiom: 'the dramatic arts as such transcend both poetry and reality' (1968:95; italics removed). Dramatic art has a status autonomous of the script and the reality upon which it draws. Only if this 'third foundation' of dramatic acting is granted, Simmel suggests, is it possible to conceive of different interpretations of the one dramatic role, each no less adequate than the others. It also follows that it is a mistake to speak of acting as 'falsification', for there is nothing in this autonomous realm to be falsified.

The earlier paper (Simmel, 1973) develops these same arguments and introduces others which connect more closely with certain of Goffman's concerns. Dramatic acting, Simmel acknowledges, is not 'a completely independent process'; rather, 'it is something involved in the manifold presentations and affairs of everyday life' (1973:308). This means that playing a part is not to be wholly comprehended as hypocrisy or deceit, 'but in terms of the involvement of the individual's life in a single expressive form which is entered upon in some pre-existing, pre-determined way [and which] is part and parcel of the way in which our everyday life is constituted' (ibid). In being a priest or an officer the individual is not aiming to

produce an effect or put on a dishonest show, but is really representing himself in these roles. The roles themselves do not derive from his innermost self but arrive as pre-existing forms awaiting to be filled by the individual's behaviour. Simmel concludes:

'Without being in any sense false or hypocritical, the personal existence of the individual is metamorphosed into some pre-determined guise which is of course produced out of the resources of his own life, but is nevertheless not merely a straightforward expression of his own life. The possibility exists for us to assume such appearances... and nevertheless remain consistent with our own nature. We are harnessed to this paradox at all times... this constitutes the prototypical form of theatricality.' (ibid:309-310)

Much of this now reads like standard role theory, but certain of Simmel's emphases are reproduced in Goffman's dramaturgy. Dramaturgy is more than a simple application of 'all the world's a stage' to everyday life. Goffman has a more specific purpose. He seeks to show how dramaturgical terminology can be used to explicate the structure of face-to-face interaction. As such he is concerned not so much with institutionally-given roles such as priest or officer but rather with the interactional roles persons assume they enact their institutional roles in face-to-face situations. Dramaturgy applies the 'all the world's a stage' metaphor to a sociologically hitherto neglected domain of social life, the interaction order. Like Simmel he emphasises that there is nothing necessarily dishonest or 'put on' about describing interactional conduct in these terms. In an important section of Presentation entitled 'Reality and contrivance'

(1959:70-76) Goffman suggests that we are not socialised into the details of the parts of play, since there is not enough time for that, but we are socialised to 'fill in' and 'manage' any part we assume. Goffman concludes 'we all act better than we know how' (1959:74). Moreover, our conduct in everyday encounters derives not from a script but from a 'command of an idiom, a command that is exercised from moment to moment with little calculation or forethought' (ibid). Goffman is thus more specific than Simmel about the social sources of the parts we play, but agrees that contrivance is not a necessary feature of them.

In the passage discussed above Simmel proposes that an 'innermost self' underlies the parts we play in everyday life. Oddly enough, Goffman appears to agree with Simmel in a hedged and qualified way, although we catch only occasional glimpses of this self in his writings (eq 1974:293ff on the 'perduring self') which are largely designed to break down the individual into analytical elements of use to interactional analysis. Goffman seeks to press to the limit the sociological study of what we presume to be the unique characteristics of the self and generally seeks to show how self manifests itself in interaction rather than regard it as an entity hidden behind interactional conduct. But in Presentation a glimpse of this innermost self (selves?) is given when he speaks of 'a crucial discrepancy between our all-too-human selves and our socialized selves' (1959:56). For the most part, however, Goffman pursues a relentless social determinism in his analyses of the self (see Chapter 6, below).

This section has indicated some correspondences between Simmel's views on dramatic acting and Goffman's dramaturgical ideas. As in the previous section, we find that features of Simmel's thought are filled out empirically by Goffman who brings a consistent interactional focus to Simmel's more broadly phrased concerns. This is not only evident in Goffman's treatment of everyday acting. It can also be seen in his treatment of dramatic acting as an autonomous art form. How is this to be distinguished from everyday acting in which it has its origins? All Simmel can do is to write of a 'turning point when the art of the stage actor detaches itself from its implication to everyday life, and is visible in fully independent forms' (1973:309). In contrast Goffman provides a detailed list of eight 'transcription practices' (see section 2.7.2 above) which transform everyday acting into the stage variety. Goffman agrees with Simmel that staged acting has a third foundation which transcends the play's script and the reproduction of the reality of a certain situation, maintaining, for instance, that if mere simulations of reality were all that theatre involved, then 'anyone with a tape recorder and a transcribing typist would be a playwright' (1974:552), but he goes on to spell out the processes which effect the emergence of dramatic acting from the script and the reality in which it is grounded.

### 3.5 The Adventure and Action

The common theme shared by Simmel's essay, 'The adventure' (1971) and Goffman's 'Where the action is' (1967) is

summarised in Elias & Dunning's (1970) felicitous phrase, 'the quest for excitement in unexciting societies'. However the focus of the two essays is not quite identical: Simmel addresses the distinctive characteristics of a form of experience whereas Goffman's paper is both an investigation of a form of interaction and a form of experience, the action frame, although neither focus is clearly articulated. Nonetheless consideration of these essays does serve to underscore certain similarities and differences in the two authors' treatments.

Simmel's repeated emphasis is that the adventure is a form of experience, a distinct way of experiencing the contents of life rather than a property of certain contents such as the love affair (Simmel's paradigm case). *In principle, any number of activities might qualify as an adventure if they are experienced in a certain way. How must the contents of life be experienced if they are to qualify as an adventure? Simmel suggests two conditions. First, the adventure has a clear and explicit episodic structure; it is, in Simmel's words 'a specific organization of some significant meaning with a beginning and an end' (1959d:246). Secondly, the adventure has an 'accidental nature' stemming from its ruptured relation to the continuity of life but is nevertheless connected to life through the identity of the adventurer. Simmel's attempt to articulate the features of the adventure results in what is, by most standards, an abstruse analysis, yet the elusiveness of these features does not deter Simmel, for he considers the adventure to be a vital aspect of the human condition:*

'We are the adventurers of the earth; our life is crossed everywhere by the tensions which mark adventure... it is the radicalness through which (the adventure) becomes perceptible as a life tension, as the rubato of the life process, independent of its materials and their differences - the quantity of these tensions becoming great enough to tear life, beyond those materials, completely out of itself: this is what transforms mere experience into adventure.'  
(ibid:257-58)

Simmel's essay does make reference to the gambler as one type of adventurer but to the extent that it uses empirical illustration at all, it refers principally to the male experience of love affairs. 'Where the action is' is by contrast a very much more richly illustrated and conceptually elaborated essay than 'The adventure'. Gambling behaviour is its major empirical point of reference and Goffman exploits the wealth of observational material he gathered whilst working as a croupier in a Las Vegas casino in the early 1960s. Although Goffman only alludes to Simmel's essay in a footnote (1967:162n.18), it is plain that 'the quest for excitement' is a central aspect of both authors' work.

Two concepts are central to Goffman's analysis, 'action' and 'character', but to get to them we must first discuss a third, 'fatefulness'. Fateful activities and situations are (1) problematic i.e. their outcome has yet to be determined, and (2) consequential i.e. have some influence on the person's later life. Persons engaged in physically dangerous work (eg mining) or certain military occupations can expect to encounter fateful situations. However sometimes people will

engage in fateful activities for their own sake; they will choose to pursue 'action' in the special sense of the term used by Goffman, and 'gambling is the prototype of action' (ibid:186). Just as Simmel emphasises that the adventure is a distinct form of experience so too does Goffman in respect of action. Noting the wide variety of uses of the term beyond the gambling context in which it emerged he adds:

'Underlying the apparent diversity in content is a single analytical property that can be sensed with sureness by persons who might be unable to define closely what it is they sense.' (ibid:188)

Action is evident in activities as diverse as participation in sports, some types of illicit drugtaking and pistol duelling.

Action, then, involves the chosen, self-conscious pursuit of fatefulness. To cope with fateful circumstances the person must possess certain 'primary capacities' - the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish the task. How the person handles himself during the exercise of these capacities, and in particular the extent of his ability to stand 'correct and steady in the face of sudden pressures' (ibid:217) are referred to as his 'character'. Thus weak character is evidenced by incapacity to behave effectively in fateful circumstances whilst strong character is indicated when the person is able to 'maintain full self control when the chips are down - whether exerted in regard to moral temptation or task performance' (ibid). Action and more generally fateful moments provide occasions for the generation, display and diminution of character.



Sometimes persons will engage in disputes with others which have as an aim or by-product the building or demolition of character. These situations Goffman calls 'character contests'. Up to this, the penultimate section of 'Where the action is' Goffman wavers between considering action as a feature of an activity and considering it as a feature of interaction. Since much of his discussion has focussed on the experiential dimension Goffman might, had he fully articulated the terminology in 1967, have referred to the 'action frame'. Examination of character contests enables Goffman to return to the socially-situated realm to consider what is to be learned 'about the mutual implications that can occur when one person's display of character bears upon another's' (ibid:239). Character may be tested in various ways: through the giving of affronts, the making of insults, and through the various gestures and comments through which points can be scored. As Goffman notes, 'the logic of fights and duels is an important feature of our daily social life' (ibid:258).

Both Simmel and Goffman discuss the personal qualities required of participants in adventures and action and their lists certainly overlap. However, close considerations of the analytic place of these qualities reveal the rather differing directions in which their analyses proceed. Among the personal qualities of the adventurer are: a desire to live in the present and act in way that is und<sup>er</sup>mined by the past and unconcerned for the future; a willingness to embrace chanciness as an integral part of life; a confident fatalism which includes an optimistic and opportunistic stance towards life's incalculable elements; a

youthful and romantic outlook that prizes life in its immediacy and particularity (Simmel 1959d:245-255). The personal qualities of the adventurer are depicted in such a way by Simmel that emphasises their contrast with the prosaic, responsible, rational and calculative outlook that is called for in so many other spheres of social life. In this way Simmel highlights the disconnectedness of the adventure from life and ordinary experience.

In contrast to Simmel's underscoring of the separateness of the adventure from life, Goffman stresses how action can be sought and found in quite ordinary activities and social situations. Moreover, Goffman argues that certain primary capacities of a prosaic and rational kind, such as care and balance in high construction work or knowledge of the odds in gambling, are prerequisites for the realisation of character. Action is thus not so remote from everyday concerns. Whilst Simmel often appears to be endorsing involvement in adventures ('the rubato of the life process' etc), Goffman is contrariwise interested in simply setting out the 'functions' of action for the individual and the society. Action permits the display of socially-valued qualities of character: courage, integrity, gallantry, composure, presence of mind, dignity and stage confidence are systematically discussed (1967:218-226). Serious action, that is, action which is of truly heroic proportions, is 'all but arranged out of everyday life' (ibid:261). Fateful activity is often highly disruptive to society's routines and may be prohibited for that reason (Goffman mentions the control of

duelling in Europe). Moreover, persons may well wish to avoid fatefulness because of its inherent dangers: 'in our society, after all, moments are to be lived through, not lived' (ibid:260). But too much 'safe and momentless living' (ibid) is likely to disconnect the individual from opportunities for expressing those values that are associated with character. Commercially-provided action has an important role to play here, being less disruptive than the serious kind.

Action functions to provide opportunities for the realisation of those positive qualities associated with character. Goffman's analysis is reminiscent of the ironies found in functionalist accounts of deviance. Goffman recognises that his theory is predicated on a 'romantic division of the world', comprising on the one hand those 'safe and silent places, the home, the well-regulated role in business, industry and the professions' (1967:268), and on the other hand the activities of those (delinquents, criminals, hustlers and sportsmen) who lay part of their selves on the line and who are prepared to jeopardise their character for the sake of a moment. Unlike the adventure which provides 'time out' for the expression of values that are at odds with the serious business of society, action provides the occasion for the realisation of values that society requires its interactants to possess, even if the opportunities for the expression of these values needs to be kept scarce in the interests of preserving those 'safe and silent places'. The development of this line of argument underlines a further way in which 'Where the action is' differs from 'The adventure'. True,

some of the more frame analytic-oriented discussions of 'action' seem distant from standard sociological concerns, but Goffman does endeavour to return to a sociological theme. In contrast, Simmel never really gets round to putting 'The adventure' on to a proper sociological footing, although other writers since his day have made efforts in this direction (Lyman & Scott, 1975; Wanderer, 1987).

### 3.6 Gender Differentiation

Both Simmel and Goffman's writings are sensitised to the important implications of gender difference in social life. This is evident in frequent references to gender and the special situation of women scattered throughout their work (a far from exhaustive listing would include Simmel 1950:138, 324, 326, 344; 1955:20-23, 30, 45-48, 57-58, 122, 179; 1968:22; 1971:121-126, 308-312; 1978:204, 215, 289; in Goffman 1959:57-58, 112-113, 161, 193-194, 205-206, 232, 236; 1961b:108, 130-131, 137-138, 145-146; 1967:197-198, 209-212, 240, 269). More importantly, both were interested in the feminist movements of their day, and both wrote directly on the theme of gender (Simmel, 1984; Goffman, 1977, 1979); it is these works which the present section compares.

However, it would be a little misleading to describe their work as 'feminist'. Whilst it must be granted that there is much debate in feminist circles about the meaning of the term and indeed there are several varieties of feminism which can be identified historically and contemporaneously, it is nevertheless true that Simmel and Goffman's work focuses on the nature and

consequences of gender differentiation. Feminism is a social and political movement whereas Simmel and Goffman's writings locate firmly within their existing intellectual frameworks. Ann Oakley suggests that 'to be a feminist means putting women first' (1984:196). If this is taken as one important minimal defining feature of the variety of feminisms, then the work of Simmel and Goffman, which has gender differentiation as its primary focus, clearly falls outside that label.

Although both Simmel and Goffman acknowledge as unquestionable the facts of women's subordination, neither treats this as a focus of analysis. Simmel observes that the women's movement of his day is concerned with 'personal participation' in existing cultural goods to which women have been denied access, and he characterises this struggle as addressing an individual situation, albeit a situation faced by millions of women. His own interest transcends the personal. It concerns the possibility of the emergence of a distinctive, objective female culture (1984:66) and this in turn requires an analysis of the bases of the differences between the sexes. Goffman similarly distances his analytical interest from that of modern feminism, claiming that 'the sociologically interesting thing about a disadvantaged category is not the painfulness of the disadvantage, but the bearing of the social structure on its generation and stability' (1977:307). His main reservation about feminist analyses of sexism is that they stop short at the injustice of discrimination against women and fail to take up the broader issue of gender differentiation in which sexist practices

are embedded (1979:8-9). Goffman also enters the caveat that, compared to other disadvantaged categories of adults, women are 'held in high regard' (1977:309). On the scale of unfair treatment they are not located very far down.

The importance of gender in social life is given equally prominent recognition by Simmel and by Goffman. Simmel writes: 'the fundamental relativity in the life of our species lies in the relationship between masculinity and femininity' (1984:102). Goffman is similarly unequivocal about the centrality of gender as a dimension of social life, for it is 'at the base of a fundamental code in accordance with which social interactions and social structures are built up, a code which also establishes the conceptions individuals have concerning their fundamental human nature' (1977:301). He further suggests that gender is a category which contributes more to 'an understanding of what our ultimate nature ought to be and how and where this nature ought to be exhibited' than any other social division (1979:8).

However, Simmel and Goffman part company in their analyses of the nature and origins of gender differentiation. For Simmel men and women represent two fundamentally different models of being, 'two existential totalities, each structured to a completely autonomous rule' (1984:72). Oakes (1984:23-25) clarifies the nature of these differences as follows:

1. Specialisation/uniformity. Men can undertake the specialised activities of the world of work without threat to their psychic unity. Women's activities are

more homogeneous, uniform and integrated into their total personalities. This can be seen in housework, which remains less specialised than most male occupations.

2. Detachment/integration. Men experience the specialised activities required by the division of labour in an attitude of detachment. Women lack this capacity for detachment because the centre and periphery of their existence is more closely connected.
3. Depersonalisation/personalisation. Men tend to insulate their character from their relationships. Women have a more integral nature which leads them to personalise their relationships. They are more easily offended because their relationships with others are experienced in a personal mode.
4. Mediacy/immediacy. Women express their thoughts and feelings more directly and spontaneously than men. There is a closer tie between experience and its expression than is evident in men.
5. Becoming/being. A widespread norm is that men act, achieve and endeavour to attain significance. In Simmel's words, 'the man externalizes himself. His energy is discharged into his performance' (1984:88). Women endeavour to attain a state of repose or beauty which 'signifies the self-contained completeness of the total being' (ibid).

Simmel's bold characterisation of the essential natures of these two 'existential totalities' has naturally attracted the criticism that he has merely universalised the received wisdom and cultural assumptions of Wilhelminian Germany (Coser, 1977). Simmel is certainly less than precise in identifying the sources of these differences which reside in part in the male's involvement in the public sphere characterised by specialisation and division of labour, and the female's relegation to the private sphere of the home (seen by Simmel as 'the supreme cultural achievement of women'; 1984:97). Simmel also indicates certain non-social sources of these differences which include

such biological universals as the putatively 'intrinsically sexual' (ibid:108) nature of women, and psychological universals such women's resistance to logical argument (ibid:119-120). These questionable assumptions undoubtedly date Simmel for the modern reader. However, the next turn taken by Simmel's analysis does have more than antiquarian interest.

As noted above, Simmel's interest in the situation of women departs from feminism in its concern with the possibility of a distinctive and objective 'female culture' rather than the 'personal' issues of women's disadvantage. Simmel is in no doubt that the objective culture of existing societies not only works in the interests of men but is also thoroughly imbued with masculine <sup>assumptions</sup>. 'The masculine is absolutized', he writes, 'as the objective simpliciter and the impartial standard of authority' (1984:104). Politics, religion, law, science, commerce, the state and art all bear the imprint of the male nature. Is a distinctively female culture possible? Simmel holds open the possibility of the discovery of 'a new continent of culture' (ibid:98) if it could be. But Simmel's response to the question is at best paradoxical, at worst contradictory. Features of the female psyche could permit distinctive contributions to medicine, historical science and the performing arts (ibid:75-86, passim). On the other hand, the objectivation of female characteristics would necessarily involve an abnegation of the transhistorical female essence; an objective female culture would so transform the female mode of being that it would lose its distinctive qualities.



In contrast to Simmel, Goffman locates his analysis of gender differentiation quite unambiguously in the 'here and now' (1977:306). Given the many sources of disorderliness in modern industrial societies - ethnic diversity, considerable differences in educational levels, the effects of the business cycle on employment and so forth - Goffman finds it surprising that so much is made of women's biological differences and the relatively brief period of infantile dependence upon the mother. It ought to be relatively simple to find solutions to this source of disorderliness, but instead a 'quite temporary biologically-grounded constraint turns out to be extended culturally' (ibid:313) into a doctrine about the essential natures of men and women. Goffman presents a theory of gender differentiation under the somewhat mysterious label of 'institutional reflexivity'. The differential treatment of males and females is often justified by folk beliefs about the presumed essential biological difference between the sexes. But for Goffman biology cannot determine social practices which are sui generis. Therefore, those practices which are presented as natural consequences of the differences between the sexes in fact honour and produce those self-same differences. Biology is not an external constraint upon social organisation. Rather, gender differences are constituted through practices of gender differentiation and appeals to essential, biologically-grounded differences are nothing more than folk beliefs - albeit beliefs that are socially highly consequential.

Goffman illustrates the argument with a review of some practices which ostensibly reflect the biological differences between the sexes but which in fact constitute those differences in our human natures. There is a gender-based division of labour which assigns domestic duties to women and defines a range of occupations outside the household as inappropriate for them. What is deemed appropriate and inappropriate to the nature of women and men comes to produce the difference between them. Cross-sexed siblings within a single household effectively socialise each other into gender-appropriate expectations and conduct. Girls are given softer beds 'because they are girls', and boys punitively sanctioned more harshly 'because they are boys'. Goffman observes 'it is as if society planted a brother with sisters so women could from the beginning learn their place, and a sister with brothers so men could learn their place. Each sex becomes a training device for the other...' (ibid:314). Segregated toilet facilities in public places are usually justified by appeals to the differing natures of men and women, as is the common practice of making women's facilities more refined and elaborate than men's. Once again, a social practice which apparently honours the difference between the sexes in fact produces that difference in the assumptions about the nature of women and men. The engendering of pronouns in European languages and the differentiation of first names along sex lines works in a similar manner, ensuring that a gender-relevant basis for interaction is available right from the start. This is not a natural phenomenon but the product of social construction, and it

is through these social constructions and many others, which appear to acknowledge some underlying biological difference but which actually creates these differences, that the real sources of gender differentiation are to be found.

Goffman extends and particularises the argument in Gender Advertisements (1979). His aim is to analyse 'gender displays', those culturally conventional expressions of sex-class membership which are *ordinarily available to us 'at a glance'*. Goffman decisively rejects the view that gender displays straightforwardly reflect hidden or underlying biological characteristics (in the process setting his approach against that of popular ethologists such as Desmond Morris). Gender displays are not residues or remnants of the evolutionary development of the human species, nor are they 'natural expressions' of our essential nature as men and women. Instead, Goffman contends that 'there is only a schedule for the portrayal of gender... only evidence of the practice between the sexes of choreographing behaviorally a portrait of relationship' (1979:8). Gender displays are to be treated in their own right and in their own terms. Persons as gendered entities enact the appropriate schedule of gender displays. Nor are gender displays simply part of the froth of social life. In the hierarchical relations between the sexes they are 'the shadow and the substance' (ibid:6) of gendered social life.

This analysis of gender as an accountable phenomenon is facilitated by a ceremonial model. Goffman argues that the

rituals of gender display serve to affirm basic social arrangements (keeping women in their place) and to present ultimate conceptions of persons and the world (our 'essential' gender identity). The central thesis advanced is that gender relationships are permeated by a behavioural vocabulary typical of parent-child relationships. The 'orientation licence', 'protective intercession', 'benign control' and 'non-person treatment' which parents extend to children also characterises the socially situated treatment of women by men. Thus, 'ritually speaking, females are equivalent to subordinate males and both are equivalent to children' (ibid:5).

The largest part of Goffman's study is devoted to a pictorial analysis of the presentations of gender in advertisements. A grammar of gender display is described: a 'single ritual idiom' which organises the 'themes' informing these small behaviours such as 'relative size', 'licensed withdrawal' and 'the ritualization of subordination'. The use of pictorial materials has the considerable advantage of allowing subtle features of gender displays to be exhibited where words alone would stand deficient. Although this is true of other work which has used this strategy, such as Bateson and Mead's Balinese Character (1942), the innovation marked by Gender Advertisements lies in its utilization of naturally-occurring photographs rather than those taken by the researcher. Indeed, a central rationale for this study is that the pictures are part of the society they describe. It is also part of Goffman's claim that what is depicted in the advertising pictures he draws upon is a stylised,

'hyper-ritualized' version of the displays used in everyday life to enact the difference between the sexes.

In these studies Goffman is considerably more cautious than Simmel about the ascription of gender-based assumptions to persons. Indeed, Goffman treats all these assumptions as beliefs amenable to formalistic analysis. He also differs from Simmel in arguing for a socially-constructed view of gender differentiation rather than holding an almost mystical notion of 'two existential totalities'. Simmel's essays on women belong more to his cultural criticism (they originally appeared in a collection of essays entitled Philosophical Culture, 1911) than his sociology; hence the treatment of male and female nature as autonomous forms. We may well wonder what Simmel might have produced had he instead chosen to treat gender as a form of sociation.

An end-note: both Simmel and Goffman's work on gender was not well-received by feminists who found that it embodied patriarchal assumptions and who regarded it as so much fiddling while Rome burns. Just as Goffman conspicuously failed to respond to Wedel's (1978) critique of his 1977 paper, so too Simmel failed to materially shift his position in the light of Marianne Weber's critique of 1912 (Scaff, 1988:21-23). For Marianne Weber, Simmel's basic mistake was to regard women as an autonomous form rather than as part of humanity. Simmel could only weakly respond that in his hands the concept of the female suffered the fate of all concepts: 'the elements of life, as soon as the creation of concepts loosens them from the mood and temper

of life as a whole and renders them independent, obey a wholly different logic and manifest quite different meanings, from those they do within the unity of life itself' (1958:133).

### 3.7 Convergences and Divergences

The topics discussed in the previous four sections - knowledge of others and information about self, the dramatic actor and dramaturgy, the adventure and action, and gender differentiation - were selected on the grounds that they appear to indicate certain elective affinities in the writings of Simmel and Goffman. In the first three cases a broad consonance between Simmel's and Goffman's concerns can be readily detected. In each of these cases clear links between Simmel's and Goffman's analyses were demonstrated. In general, Goffman brings a uniform focus on the particulars of interactional conduct to bear upon the more heterogenous treatment of topics provided by Simmel. In these cases it was shown how certain of Simmel's often broadly-phrased concerns were handled in a more conceptually precise and ethnographically detailed manner by Goffman. This is perhaps one modest sense in which it is possible to speak of 'progress' in sociology. It is primarily achieved by the sifting of older ideas through a sharply-defined analytical focus: the interaction order.

In the fourth case, gender differentiation, there are marked differences between Simmel and Goffman. Goffman brings a quite radical social constructionism to bear at that point of Simmel's analysis where he employs absolutist assumptions: the

notion that men and women represent two autonomous existential totalities. In consequence, their analyses are divergent. However, they converge on the significance to be attached to the gender dimension of social life. Whilst Simmel's analysis is ambiguous about the prospect for change in existing gender relations, Goffman's suggests that quite thoroughgoing alterations are possible.

The four cases selected for discussion do not exhaust the potential elective affinities between Simmel and Goffman's topics. Other candidates would include their respective notions of exchange and their views on the emotions (on the latter, Gerhards, 1986:905-906 rather glibly suggests that Goffman on embarrassment adds nothing new to Simmel on shame). The four topics reviewed here were selected simply on the grounds that they presented 'obvious' points of comparison.

Each of the topics reviewed underscore the narrower focus and very much more specific analytical interests of Goffman in interaction and frame analysis. Whilst neither Simmel nor Goffman seek to construct a theory of society as a whole, Simmel's sociological interests are much broader in span than Goffman's. Put otherwise, the interaction order addresses a narrower part of social life than the forms of sociation. The point can be underlined if we review some of the typologies employed to characterise their work in its entirety.

Levine (1965:99-104) arranges Simmel's forms of sociation under three headings:

1. Social processes. Relatively simple and stable configurations of interaction, eg the division of labour, the dyad, conflict, the secret society, sociability, fashion.
2. Social types. Analyses of the typical characteristics of sociated persons, eg the superordinate, the poor, the stranger, the adventurer.
3. Developmental patterns. More complex, diachronic forms of sociation, eg social differentiation, group expansion and individuality.

A lengthier classification is provided by Abel (1929:26):

1. Characterisations of complex situations, eg slavery, legal contest, exchange of goods.
2. Characterisations of norms regulating human conduct, eg law, custom, honour.
3. Characterisations of social types, eg the stranger, the poor, the middle-man.
4. Definitions of types of group, eg family, secret society, political party.
5. Elements and properties of group structure, eg hierarchy, stability, group persistence.
6. Characterisations of individual and group relations, eg conflict, super- and subordination.
7. Generalisations about social processes, eg group expansion and individuality.

These typologies indicate the range of forms of sociation Simmel chooses to analyse and can usefully be compared with Birrell's (1978) typology and this writer's classification of Goffman's writings (see Table 1 and Figure 2 in section 2.4 above). Alternatively, the classifications of Simmel's forms of sociation may be compared with Goffman's (1983:6-7) sketch of the 'basic substantive units' of the interaction order: (1) ambulatory units



(singles, withs, cueues) (2) contacts (3) conversational encounters (4) platform formats (5) celebrative social occasions. Plainly, Goffman's interest in forms is much narrower in scope than Simmel's and is focussed in a more disciplined manner on microsociological issues.

Yet, as this chapter has attempted to show, there do appear to be some substantive elective affinities, certain parallel topics and substantive themes shared by Simmel and Goffman. How might this be explained? One possibility is to draw upon Weber's notion of value-relevance and to argue that these shared substantive topics derive from similarities in the biography and cultural milieu of each thinker. Such an explanation might draw upon their marginality as Jewish intellectuals (cf. Cuddihy, 1974) and the similarities between the social and cultural environments of Chicago and Berlin (cf. D. Smith, 1988:44-48). Conversely, some of the differences between the two may be accounted for by Goffman's 'Canadianism' (cf. MacGregor, 1986). Further aspects of value-relevance are discussed in section 5.2 below. A second explanation is to hold that the convergences identified between Simmel and Goffman actually reside in the topic-matter: that knowledge of other and information about self, the dramatic analogy, adventure and action, and gender relations are simply timeless and general problems of any kind of social organisation. These convergences arise because they point to certain very central aspects of social life, to ubiquitous themes than any serious analysis must confront sooner or later.

## CHAPTER 4

## SNAPSHOTS 'SUB SPECIE AETERNITATIS'

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers some analytical and methodological convergences and divergences in Simmel's and Goffman's sociologies. Goffman's work is viewed as an extension and development of the formal method pioneered by Simmel. It is argued that close examination of Simmel's programme and practice can help to fill certain lacunae in Goffman's own sketchy methodological comments. In both cases, however, it is occasionally necessary to go beyond these authors self-understandings in order to fully appreciate the cogency of their methods. Furthermore, Goffman's sociology can be seen to develop Simmel's formal method in a manner more in keeping with the original spirit animating Simmel's enterprise than the work of subsequent formalists such as von Wiese.

Simmel once set himself the task of 'finding in each of life's details the totality of its meaning' (1978:55). Although always conscious of the 'insecure foundations' on which analysis is built, Simmel (and Goffman after him) was never afraid to attempt to extract universally valid principles from the most insignificant phenomena. Simmel's sociology, to quote the title of a collection of his popular articles, provides us with 'snapshots sub specie aeternitatis' ('under the aspect/appearance of eternity'), ie. analyses of social processes bound together by

the attempt to identify the universal, eternal elements that run through them (Frisby, 1981:102-131). The same formalising spirit pervades Goffman's sociology and is alluded to in the posthumously published Presidential Address to the ASA: 'for myself, I believe that human social life is ours to study naturalistically, sub specie aeternitatis' (1983a:17).

#### 4.2 Formal Sociology as a Special Social Science

Both Simmel and Goffman have distinctly circumscribed conceptions of sociological investigation. Their analyses are carried out within well-defined boundaries which are in turn related to the differing states of the development of the discipline of sociology in turn of the century Germany and mid-twentieth century America. Simmel had to struggle against widespread scepticism among the academics of his day about the very possibility of an independent discipline of sociology whereas Goffman was able to show a productive new direction for an already well-established discipline to take.

Simmel sought to establish sociology as a 'special' social science, an autonomous discipline with its own field of study which could be clearly demarcated from other social sciences. This conception stood in contrast to 'general' social science, an objective principally associated with Comte, which held sociology to be the all-embracing study of everything that takes place in society. The 'general' conception of sociology as a science was considered by Simmel as needlessly vague and imprecise, a comprehensive label which disguised a multiplicity of

investigative stances. Simmel argued that sociology had no exclusive claim to investigate social reality as such. It could only approach that reality from a particular point of view. That point of view, the special cognitive purpose adopted by the sociologist, requires the discrimination of the forms of social reality from its contents. Formal sociology as a special social science addresses the forms of sociation.

The debate between proponents of 'special' and 'general' conceptions of social science is now obsolete, the special conception (although not Simmel's own version of it) having come to prevail. Goffman can be considered as building on and refining formal sociology as a special social science in calling for a 'sub-area of sociology' to devote itself to investigation of the interaction order. In the Preface to Strategic Interaction Goffman declares that his 'ultimate interest is to develop the study of face-to-face interaction as a naturally bounded, analytically coherent field - a sub-area of sociology' (1969:ix), and he never strayed far from this path.

Simmel's advocacy of formal sociology as a special social science, however, does have more than antiquarian interest. It can shed light on some of the central tenets of Goffman's own sociological programme. In particular, it shows how a sociology can be developed that clearly recognises the individual as the source of action but which does not fall prey to an extreme atomism or methodological individualism. Simmel consistently grounds his sociology in 'psychological presuppositions' (Simmel,

in Frisby 1984b:116) and Goffman likewise acknowledges that 'a psychology is necessarily involved' in 'the proper study of interaction' (1967:2-3) but both go on to propose that the social is an emergent property of the activities of individuals.

Simmel's notion of sociation, of society as consisting most fundamentally of individuals connected by interaction, is designed to escape the flaws of both individualist (nominalist) and holist (realist) conceptions of the social realm epitomized in Simmel's own day by the views of the Geisteswissenschaften tradition on the one hand and the organicism of Comte and Spencer on the other. The individualist view, in seeing only individuals as real and existing, embodies a mistaken <sup>idea of the</sup> role of abstraction in the sciences. It misconstrues the sense in which the individual can validly be an 'object of cognition' (and thus amenable to scientific investigation) as distinct from 'an object of experience' (beyond the pale of science) (Simmel, 1950:6). Apart from this, individualism also fails to recognise the obvious presence of 'synthetic events and collective phenomena' such as political territories, the feminist movement and so on (ibid). Similarly, the excessive holism characteristic of organicist theories was also uncongenial to Simmel. He was suspicious of the idea of non-observable collective entities and believed that such hypostatized conceptions of society were imprecise and holding up the progress of sociology (1909:303). Goffman's sociology similarly treads a middle path between individualist and holist conceptions of the social realm. Goffman agrees that individuals 'contribute the ultimate materials' but warns against

restricting the study of interaction to 'the individual and his psychology' (1967:2). It is clear, for example, that Goffman regards Denzin and Keller's phenomenologically-informed analysis of handshaking to be too individualistic, too psychologistic to qualify as anything close to an adequate sociological account of the practice (1981b:61-62). And as an illustration of Goffman's distrust of holist conceptions, we might take the playful combination of methodological and political criticisms contained in the observation that 'the reference unit, "American society", ... is something of a conceptual scandal, very nearly a contradiction in terms' (1971:xvii).

Both Simmel and Goffman share a conception of the social realm as an emergent product of the actions of individuals and both are wary of reification and psychological reductionism. For Simmel sociation consists of individuals who orient to, modify and influence one another, or as he puts it in a favourite phrase, sociation is 'being with one another, for one another, against one another' (1950:43). Society is thus conceived in a thoroughly processual fashion as an 'occurrence' or 'event': '... society certainly is not a "substance" nothing concrete, but an event: it is the function of receiving and effecting the fate and development of one individual by another.' (1950:11). Formal sociology is thus afforded a subject matter that is 'something "real" and explorable' (1950:11), namely reciprocal orientations and influences. Goffman's own recognition of the emergent properties of interaction is evident in his comment that social situations 'constitute a reality sui generis as He used to say'

(1964b:134) and in his recommendation of the study of 'moments and their men' (1967:3). In terms of broad ontological assumptions, Simmel and Goffman appear to converge with Durkheim's 'associational' or 'relational realism' (Alpert 1939:151-57).

A clear indication of the way Goffman has drawn on and refined Simmel's concept of sociation is seen in the Introduction to Presentation of Self. There Goffman adds copresence to the defining characteristic of sociation, reciprocal orientation and influence. Thus face-to-face interaction is defined by Goffman as 'the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence' (1959:15). He goes on to provide the kind of elementary conceptual clarification largely absent in Simmel's writing, differentiating the particular occasion on which face-to-face interaction occurs (the 'encounter') from the activities of the participant in the process (a 'performance'). Goffman thus does not simply borrow but develops Simmel's concept of sociation. His emphasis on the social consequences of physical copresence introduces some behavioural considerations into Simmel's original concern with reciprocal orientations and influences. How a particular orientation can be achieved through a given posture or mode of dress, how physical handicap influences an encounter's transactions are the kind of questions that Goffman's approach brings to the fore.

A further convergent feature of Simmel's and Goffman's approaches is their concern to articulate the general psychological presuppositions required for sociation or face-to-face interaction to occur. Simmel's analysis of this issue is set out in his famous essay 'How is society possible?' and the question posed and procedure followed can be used to cast some light on the very general assumptions about face-to-face interaction underlying Goffman's entire enterprise.

In posing the question, 'how is society possible?' Simmel takes up Kant's essentially epistemological question 'how is nature possible?' and gives it an ontological twist. Kant's answer was that knowledge of nature was possible because the mind was innately supplied with a finite set of a priori forms of cognition which supplied the basic equipment for organising the impressions of our senses. Thus knowledge of nature is only possible because of the capacity of observers to order sense impressions by means of the forms of cognition.

Simmel adopts Kant's general procedure to address a rather different question: he wishes to explain how the 'unity' or 'synthesis' (or what we might now call the 'orderliness') of society is possible. The unity or orderliness of society, unlike that of nature, is made possible without the intervention of an outside observer. The unity we call society is made possible by the activity of the members who constitute it. In order to seek a satisfactory answer to the question of how society is possible Simmel examines 'the conditions which reside a priori in the



elements themselves, through which they combine, in reality, into the synthesis, society'. (Simmel, 1959b: 340). Since society for Simmel consists of sociation, the interaction between individuals ('the elements themselves'), then it must have its ultimate basis in individual existences, in certain cognitive dispositions. Thus Simmel asks, what are the universal and a priori characteristics that must be presupposed as extant in all individual minds in order for them to engage in sociation? What cognitive procedures must be present in every mind for any kind of sociation to take place at all? Simmel's answer is to posit three 'sociological apriorities' which are designed to represent a sociological equivalent of Kant's a priori forms of cognition, but which unlike Kant's forms cannot be quite so lucidly expressed.

The sociological apriorities account for 'society as a fact of knowing', a view Simmel describes as his 'epistemological theory of society' (1910:378). Very briefly, the apriorities are: (1) that our knowledge of others is always imperfect, therefore we can never relate to others in terms of their pure and unsullied individuality, but only through the medium of typifications; (2) that empirical social life is not entirely social: extra-social elements interpenetrate the individual's social being; (3) the concept of vocation (or role in modern terminology) expresses the third apriority: 'society' offers positions which are anonymous in character and yet these positions are taken up by individuals on the basis of some subjective inner calling. Thus society is made possible because

we are able to typify others, because we are not wholly socially determined, and because the 'needs' of society meet the 'needs' of the individual through the various roles assumed by individuals.

The sociological apriorities are like Kant's forms of cognition in that they state a priori conditions making the social order possible. These conditions are a priori because they are posited as prior to and logically independent of any particular social experience. They are necessary features of the cognitive apparatus of all individuals which must be presupposed by the very possibility of sociality. They are the psychological orientations or cognitive sets that individuals must have in order to relate to others.

In short, the sociological apriorities state the necessary cognitive preconditions which are required of individuals for sociation to emerge. A corresponding set of assumptions can be derived from Goffman's work. The following is a tentative attempt to delineate the sociological apriorities presumed necessary by Goffman for the social order of face-to-face interaction to emerge. In face-to-face interaction: (1) the individual is accessible to the naked senses of all the others present, and will find them accessible to him. As well as giving information, typically through talk, the individual will exude or 'give off' expressive messages about him/herself. This information is (a) reflexive, i.e. conveyed by the very person it is about, and (b) is embodied i.e. evinced by that person's

bodily signs. The individual is capable of drawing inferences about the other on the basis of this information. This enables the individual to 'audit' or 'monitor' others. (2) The individual is a 'transceiver' of expressive information: 'each giver is himself a receiver, and each receiver a giver' (1963a:16). This comprises the grounds of the individual's capacity to take into consideration the attitude of others present. (3) The individual will carefully monitor the information he/she gives and exudes in an attempt to influence and control the prevailing definition of the situation. For face-to-face interaction to be possible, individuals must be capable of (i) monitoring others (ii) taking the attitude of others and (iii) controlling information about themselves. These general psychological assumptions appear to be Goffman's equivalent of Simmel's sociological apriorities, and may be attributed the same status. Indeed, on occasion Goffman slips into a Simmelian mode of conceiving of the possibility of society. One way Simmel formulates the problem is to ask how an 'aggregate' of individuals can become a society. Goffman suggests that copresence transforms 'a mere aggregate' of individuals into 'a little society, a little group, a little deposit of social organization' (1963a:243; see also *ibid*:196) in virtue of the expressive capacities of humans just outlined.

Simmel and Goffman, it is argued, have broadly congruent conceptions of the social realm. But according to Simmel, the special social science of formal sociology not only identifies a particular subject matter, it also takes a distinct investigative

stance towards it. Further examination of the distinction between form and content is required in order to more fully appreciate what is distinctive about formal sociology's approach.

#### 4.3 Form and Content

According to one leading Simmel scholar, 'it would not be an exaggeration to describe the concept of form as Simmel's fundamental methodological instrument' (Oakes, 1980:8). The form-content distinction is the distinguishing feature of all of Simmel's mature work, not simply his sociology. In the context of his sociological writings, content refers to:

'... everything that is present in individuals (the immediate concrete loci of historical reality) - drive, interest, purpose, inclination, psychic state, movement - everything that is present in them in such a way as to engender or mediate effects upon others or to receive such effects.' (1959a:315)

Contents, 'these materials which fill life, these motivations which propel it' (ibid) are psychological (and perhaps biological), not social in nature. Sociation has its origins in these mental states and bodily dispositions of individuals which propel them into 'being with one another, for one another, against one another'. Forms are the structuring principles which account for the particular character of the reciprocal orientations and influences assumed by sociation in any instance. In empirical social life form and content 'constitute one reality':

'Any social phenomenon or process is composed of two elements which in reality are inseparable: on the one hand, an interest, a purpose, a motive; on the other, a form or mode of interaction through which, or in the shape of which, that content attains social reality.'  
(ibid)

The contents of sociation are realised through the forms; yet, as Simmel is at pains to emphasize, forms have no reality or existence apart from contents.

Simmel's consideration of the relations between psychological and sociological explanations reveals an important feature of formal sociology as a special social science. In keeping with his belief that only individuals 'exist', Simmel holds that 'the givens of sociology are psychological processes whose immediate reality presents itself first of all under psychological categories' (1959a:332). A psychological explanation of sociation is possible because sociation has a psychical dimension (the action, feeling, and so forth of the individual). But this fact need not lead us down the reductionist road. To scientifically treat the admittedly psychological data of sociology does not necessarily entail a psychological approach, because the 'sense and intent' of scientific activity does not have to be psychological: the same subject matter can be treated from the point of view of biology, of chemistry, of economics, and so on. Now we can see one reason why Simmel was so insistent upon the status of sociology as a 'special' social science, for this doctrine connects with his general conception of science: 'there is always one reality which

we cannot scientifically comprehend in its immediateness and totality' (1909:314) but which can be analyzed from a plurality of standpoints including those represented by the various sciences. For these reasons sociology may validly address 'the objective reality of sociation' which although embodied in psychic processes nevertheless also presents a 'synthesis' or 'unity' analyzable into its forms by means of sociological abstraction.

Scientific abstraction plays a prominent role in the development of the special science of society. For Simmel 'abstractions alone produce science out of the complexity or unity of reality' (1959a:316). Formal sociology effects a transformation of the essentially psychological facts of human life by means of an abstraction into form and content. This abstraction reveals the 'purely social' elements of human life. Simmel advances his case by analogy with geometry. Geometry investigates spatial forms in abstraction from their manifestations in the world. It is interested in only one aspect of the material objects of the world, spatiality, and it leaves to other sciences the task of analysing their remaining aspects. The geometrical analogy clarifies the problem that faces formal sociology in becoming a special social science. Just as geometry abstracts forms of spatial relationship from the material world, so sociology should restrict itself to the abstraction of the forms of sociation. Although a geometrical analogy is Simmel's favourite way of justifying the independent status of sociology,

he sometimes pursues a grammatical analogy, recommending that formal sociology must pursue a grammar of sociation (1950:22).

Given the much greater development of sociolinguistics in Goffman's time, it is hardly surprising that the grammatical analogy features in some of Goffman's programmatic statements, especially in the light of the affinity between sociolinguistic interests and Goffman's own (cf 1971:xviii-xix). For example:

'I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another.' (1967:2)

Goffman is fully conversant with the way formal sociology rules out the particular psychological considerations operating in any actual instance and focusses instead on more general psychological attributes in its account of sociation. Indeed, Goffman's comment at the end of his Introduction to Interaction Ritual could well serve as formal sociology's own programmatic slogan: 'Not then men and their moments. Rather, moments and their men.' (1967:3). Simmel's basic outlook has been put in a different language but its substance remains unchanged: sociology must concentrate its attention upon the typical configurations and channels in which contents are made manifest. Formal sociology offers not a motion picture but a set of 'stills' of social life - albeit 'stills' of that life's critical 'dynamic' features in which the forms are the very means through which diverse motives attain realisation in (and as) society. Indeed, 'form' and 'life' are opposed notions in Simmel's scheme of

things. Life always outstrips form, and can never be fully grasped by it (Weingartner, 1962).

A clear indication that Goffman utilises the form-content distinction in a closely Simmelian fashion may be seen in some of the statements in the theoretical, 'necessarily abstract' Introduction to Presentation of Self. Simmel's language is very much in evidence. The 'interactional modus vivendi' that Goffman labels the 'working consensus' of an encounter may be 'quite different in content' from the working consensus of another, and yet 'regardless of such difference in content ... the general form of those working arrangements is the same' (1959:9-10).

Formal analysis takes little cognizance of the expressed views of the participants and in this sense psychological considerations receive short shrift. Take a central tenet of the impression management thesis as an example: 'Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of him.' (1959:3). A little later Goffman delimits his sphere of concern to the participant's dramaturgical problems of presentation, and excludes from examination 'the specific content of any activity presented by the individual participant' (1959:15).

From the preceding it can be seen that Simmel and Goffman recognise the grounding of the social realm in the psychology of individuals, but they then insist that what results is an



emergent entity amenable to formal sociological analysis. This important distinction is lost on those who dismiss their work as mere 'social psychology'. It is therefore not fortuitous that Simmel's and Goffman's sociological analyses share a focus on the apparently insignificant phenomena of everyday life. Simmel succeeds in placing the study of fleeting 'sub-institutional' interactions on a par with the larger, more enduring social institutions that make up sociology's conventionally-conceived subject matter.

Goffman cites Simmel's views as a legitimation for his own interest in the sub-institutional. His doctoral dissertation is prefaced by a lengthy quotation from the Basic Questions of Sociology (Simmel, 1950:9-10). Ordinarily, says Simmel, we use the term 'society' to refer to permanent social structures which are crystallized in the state, the family, social classes, organisations and so on. But we must not forget that

'... in addition to these, there exists an immeasurable number of less conspicuous forms of relationship and kinds of interaction. Taken singly, they may appear negligible. But since in actuality they are inserted into the comprehensive, and, as it were, official social formations, they alone produce society as we know it.' (1950:9)

Without these 'microscopic-molecular processes' it would be impossible to relate the institutional order with 'the real life of society as we encounter it in our experience.' Simmel continues: '(W)ithout the interspersed effects of countless minor syntheses, society would break up into a multitude of

discontinuous systems ... Here are the interactions among the atoms of society. They account for all the toughness and elasticity, all the colour and consistency of social life, that is so striking and yet so mysterious.' (1950:10).

Some sixty years later, Goffman could still report that the 'neglected situation' (Goffman, 1964b) was that situations were being neglected as serious objects of sociological inquiry and could open Relations in Public with the following passage:

'The realm of activity that is generated by face-to-face interaction and organised by norms of co-mingling - a domain containing weddings, family meals, chaired meetings, forced marches, service encounters, queues, crowds, and couples, has never been sufficiently treated as a subject matter in its own right. In fact, a convenience has often been made of it. Whenever a concrete illustration has been needed of how it is with a social establishment or a bit of social structure, or even a society, interaction vignettes have been fetched in to provide vivid evidence and, incidentally, a little obeisance to the fact that there are people out there moving about. Thus interaction practices have been used to illuminate other things, but themselves are treated as though they did not need to be defined or were worth defining. Yet the nicest use for these events is the explication of their own generic character.' (1971:xi)

It is characteristic of the entire approach of Simmel and Goffman to recognise the fundamental character of the type of social order they analyse, and yet to accord it no theoretically privileged position. Simmel's strongest justification is to claim that in these 'microscopic-molecular processes' we can see society in its status nascendi i.e. in the process of being produced and reproduced. Goffman is similarly reticent about providing a compelling justification for the study of the

interaction order. 'Because it is there' (1983a:17) is one answer given. Elsewhere, Goffman reminds us that 'more than to any family or club, more than to any nation, the individual belongs to gatherings' (1963a:248) and he maintains that 'it is in social situations that most of the world's work gets done' (1979:5-6). But little theoretical capital is made out of these observations, perhaps because Goffman does not consider face-to-face interaction, everyday life or any other realm to occupy a special theoretical status (see esp 1974:ch.14). However, one consequence of the absence of sustained theoretical justification for an interactional focus is to pointedly raise queries about its relation to the larger social units that sociology has traditionally investigated.

Both Simmel and Goffman recognise the existence and significance of larger social structures and processes. But whilst Goffman is almost totally silent on these larger structures and processes, Simmel does devote a portion of his sociological work to their analysis, most notably in The Philosophy of Money (albeit in a diffuse and unconventional way: he has no theory of the structure of modern society and the general direction of his thinking casts a question mark over its possibility). There Simmel explores the far-reaching social and personal consequences of the introduction of monetary exchange and offers an analysis of the rationalisation process which anticipates many of the central themes of Max Weber's more famed discussion (Faught, 1985). Neither Simmel nor Goffman, then, take a dismissive attitude towards the study of the institutional

framework of society. They simply see it as lying outside of the remit of their formal sociologies.

Giddens suggests that Goffman's 'studied refusal to be concerned with issues of large-scale social organization and history' leans towards a view that microsociology addresses 'the essential reality of social life (1984:139). A Simmelian reading of Goffman, however, sees its exclusive focus on the interaction order as a theoretical election, a self-imposed choice, not necessarily implying anything about the reality or significance of macro-level concerns. Recently Frisby and Sayer have presented the intriguing argument that the grounding of Simmel's sociology requires a concept of society as a whole, a concept which is conspicuously 'absent' in his work (1986:ch.6).

The restricted scope of Simmel's and Goffman's sociological concerns naturally raises the question of how they conceptualise the relationship between micro- and macro-levels of social reality. Simmel's view is that forms of sociation (or more accurately, constellations of forms) may 'crystallize' into institutionalised structures, such as the state, trade unions, the church, social classes and organisations. These sometimes appear to have a life of their own, to possess an objective facticity that seems quite divorced from the conduct of individuals, but Simmel is constantly at pains to stress how the forms of sociation continuously feed into these larger social formations. The detail of the relationship between micro- and macro-levels is not provided by Simmel, but his general theme is

that 'more complex social formations are extensions of simpler interactions between individuals' (Frisby, 1984a:62-3).

Goffman considers it misleading to think of larger social structures as straightforward 'extensions' of interactions between individuals. Although the actions of individuals can have an impact on social structures (for example, in organizations) Goffman is decidedly opposed to aggregationist views which see social structures as simple 'composites' or 'summaries' of what transpires in face-to-face interaction, since they deny the very property of emergence that he insists must characterise a properly sociological approach to the interaction order.

Goffman's concern, of course, is not with the nature of these larger social units as such but with their bearing on encounters. His initial statement on this issue is contained in 'Fun in games' (1961b) and the position is amplified in 'The interaction order' (1983a). However, it is worth noting that a concern with the effects of the person's external (i.e. institutionally-provided) attributes on interactional conduct is a submerged theme in Presentation (note its extensive use of illustrations drawn from occupational ethnographies), Asylums and the work on gender. Two models of the relationship are proposed. One sees the encounter as surrounded by a 'membrane' composed of 'transformation rules' which select and modify the external attributes that are allowed to figure in the encounter (1961b:29-34). The other model posits a relation of 'loose

coupling' (1983a:11) between interactional practices and wider social structures in which no generalised formulation of a neat meshing of the two is considered possible.

If social structures do not straightforwardly determine the contours of the interaction order, and vice-versa, then there can be no easy way of discerning 'the structure of a kinship system' or 'the shape of the ethnic succession in a municipal administration' (1983a:9) by aggregating what occurs in particular encounters, for these large-scale units themselves possess emergent properties. Goffman is perhaps more consistent than Simmel in this respect, for he extends the emergent properties argument to those social units in which he has no analytical interest, effectively granting a 'relative autonomy' to the conventional objects of sociological investigation in exchange for assuming a relative autonomy for his own.

Simmel's fundamental assumptions about the forms of sociation can serve to lend qualified support to Gonos' (1977) structuralist interpretation of Goffman's sociology. Gonos' arguments are an important corrective to those symbolic interactionist interpretations of Goffman which over-emphasise the uniqueness and precariousness of situations and the centrality of an independent self in producing them. In considering symbolic interactionist interpretations it is necessary to distinguish between the tradition and the label. As an intellectual tradition it usually refers to the work of those sociologists trained at Chicago during the decade after World

War II, ostensibly under the intellectual leadership of Blumer and Hughes. Goffman was apparently happy to accept the label as an apt description of some of his early work (1961a:47). In Strategic Interaction however he distances the framework there developed from symbolic interactionism (which he now expressly identifies with Blumer), arguing the 'strategic interaction appears to advance the symbolic interactionist approach' (1969:136). Towards the end of his life Goffman appeared to become quite exasperated with the assignment of the symbolic interactionist label to his ideas, inveighing against the 'guilt by pigeonholing' (1981a:61) it produced and issuing a caution to intellectual historians about its indiscriminate use (Winkin, 1984). Gonos' structuralist interpretation suggests that Goffman's sociology substantially departs from the symbolic interactionist tradition. However, it is an interpretation which makes for the reification of frames and tends to result in an exaggerated decentring of the self. In view of Goffman's (1981b) own dismissal of strong structuralist interpretations of his sociology, it is worth seeking another source which also stresses the facticity and determinacy of interactional forms but which does not lose sight of the delicate tension between the demands of structure and agency characteristic of Goffman's position (cf. Crook and Taylor, 1980). Recourse to Simmel's thinking on the 'dignity' of the forms of sociation may prove instructive here.

In speaking of the 'dignity' of the forms Simmel contended first that they may persist irrespective of the personnel who enact them in any given instance, and secondly that the structure

of the forms is independent of their historical realizations. This enables us to speak of the 'objective structure' of forms which consists of typical configurations of reciprocal orientations and influences. The dignity of the forms finally derives from their capacity to transcend history and culture so that 'no culture is entirely free to "define" typical situations' (Tenbruck, 1959:86). At the same time the objective structure of the forms (which is always essentially provisional) is 'anchored' into individuals by the meanings that reciprocal orientations and influences have for interacting individuals.

These meanings, however, comprise part of the contents of social life and are of no special analytical interest to formal sociology. Weber recognised this when, in setting out the basic concepts of interpretive sociology, he chided Simmel for failing to distinguish subjectively intended meanings (1968:4). Formal sociology is interested in the 'objective meaning' or determinate properties of an interaction or relationship whereas interpretive sociology places a premium on the reasons people have for acting as they do (cf. Weber, 1972). Unlike the interpretive tradition of Weber and Schutz, the meaning of an act for an actor is not a theoretical priority for Simmel or Goffman, as evidenced for example by Goffman's interest in "'effectively" projected' (1959:6) rather than subjectively intended definitions of the situation. As Tenbruck in a trenchant defence and elaboration of Simmel's method points out, forms of sociation have 'a dual character, at once superior to the actors and subject to them' (Tenbruck, 1959:88). Action



originates in individuals who can only realise their own interests and motives by complying with the forms, forms which are themselves subject to modification by the motives and interests of individuals. The tension between the demands of structure and agency is thus preserved by the 'dual character' of the forms: they are objective structures superior to and exercising constraint over the course of an individual's action; yet they are produced by, and may be modified by the interacting individuals who alone exist.

#### 4.4 The NeoKantian Basis of Formal Sociology

Further consideration of the nature and implications of formal sociology requires an examination of its neoKantian roots. Attention to these roots sheds some light on a common complaint levelled at Goffman's work, namely, that it does not appear to 'go anywhere' or cumulate, that the corpus as a whole is a shapeless collection of conceptual frameworks that does not 'add up' or result in a general theory of face-to-face interaction. It is suggested that one source of this aspect of Goffman's work resides in its broadly neoKantian conception of the relation between concepts and the world.

Although Kantian in origin, Simmel's use of the notion of form is rather wider than Kant's. Weingartner characterizes one side of Simmel's entire enterprise as 'the "de-intellectualization" of Kant' (1962:57 n.121); the 'decognitivization' of Kant might be an even better description. Whereas Kant was simply interested in postulating the universal

cognitive categories that made knowledge of the world possible, Simmel extends the notion to cover the necessary principles required for a wide range of human experience: social, religious, artistic and historical. However these principles lack the fixity of Kant's concepts.

Form is a notion central to all of Simmel's mature work. The task of a form is shape inchoate reality, the 'multiplicity' of 'world stuff' (Weingartner, 1962:32) into something determinate: a whole, a unity, a synthesis. In becoming 'formed' a structure is imparted to contents. Forms, then, are synthesizing principles necessary to grasp some aspect of reality that is unknowable in its totality. There is, for Simmel, an essential conflict between reality and 'life', and our (formed) knowledge of reality and life. Life cannot be captured by knowledge: that is the fundamental mistake of any historical realism that seeks to 'tell it as it really was' (Simmel, 1977). Social reality in its totality and complexity is unknowable, is not open to direct scientific 'portrayal'. Scientific knowledge is thus unavoidably partial. The production of knowledge involves the ordering of reality by concepts (Bergner, 1981:82). It is as Simmel notes, 'a process (in) which we inject into reality an ex post-facto intellectual transformation of the immediately given reality' (1950:8).

Simmel's argument is that any phenomenon can be looked at from a variety of standpoints and it is the special cognitive purposes of the investigator which frame the character of the

knowledge obtained about the phenomenon. Thus, the emergence of a new religion is not simply a religious phenomenon, but can also be studied by history, psychology, sociology and so forth (Simmel 1978:55). This view stands in contrast to Durkheim's admonition to treat social facts as things whose objective properties can be scientifically established (on Simmel and Durkheim, see Levine, 1985). In this connection it is useful to note Riemer's (1953:107-108) contrast between 'positivistic' and 'pragmatic' orientations to the conduct of research. The positivistic orientation seeks to discover the social world 'as it really is' whilst the pragmatic orientation is satisfied with the exploration of 'specific aspects of reality'. The latter orientation is especially prominent at the advancing edge of sociology and it has its roots in neoKantian concerns.

Simmel's advocacy of a special social science of sociology must be set against this neoKantian background. Formal sociology abstracts the forms of sociation in the same way that Euclidean geometry abstracts forms of spatiality. Simmel's formal concepts are then very similar in design (although perhaps not function) to Weber's ideal types, or more specifically, the 'generic' or 'basic' ideal types of Economy and Society (Tenbruck, 1959; Rex, 1971). There is, however, a fundamental distinction between the projects of formal and interpretive sociology. For Weber, the aim is to render 'historical individuals' intelligible; ideal types and type generalisations are simply a means to that end. By contrast Simmel (and Goffman after him) seek only the identification and classification of social forms. Neither is

interested in questions of 'causality' pace Weber and this has led some critics to consider their work to be merely descriptive and not genuinely explanatory in character.

Robin Williams (1983) has drawn attention to three aspects of Goffman's methodology that are convergent with the neoKantian tradition: its perspectivism, its conceptual constructivism and its analytical dualism. Perspectivism is evident in Goffman's concern to develop 'frameworks' and 'points of reference' that are avowedly selective and arbitrary. Through such tentative terminology Goffman quietly teaches us that analysis must start somewhere, but there is nowhere it has to begin. Conceptual constructivism points up Goffman's lifelong interest in the development and illustration of concepts and conceptual frameworks, principally through the use of metaphor. There is, Williams observes, a highly stable conceptual core surrounded by a penumbra of more shifting usages. Goffman's analytic dualism refers to 'the consistent distinction to be made between the transparency of analysis on the one hand, and the opacity of the object world on the other'. Our concepts are imperfect tools to grasp an ultimately unknowable reality. Goffman thus presents a sociology that is, without ever proclaiming itself as such, 'self-conscious about the meaning of what it is to know' (Williams, 1983:102). To complain that Goffman's continual return to new starting points and conceptual scratches simply marks the repackaging of old ideas, to imply that it is a flaw that the frameworks do not 'add up' to a general analytic theory of interaction is to miss the respect in which Goffman's

sociology is acutely sensitive, in Weber's phrase, to the 'eternal youth' of the cultural sciences.

#### 4.5 Formal Concept Formation

Since concepts cannot reflect reality, an examination of the way they are constructed in given instances becomes a significant issue (Bergner, 1981: 83). Inductivist imagery is directly conveyed by Simmel's terminology. He repeatedly speaks of 'abstracting' the forms of sociation from contents. In this respect Simmel's procedure contrasts with Plato's theory of forms, as he observes himself in The Philosophy of Money. For Plato, knowledge of the real world is deduced from universals embodied in certain abstract ideal Forms. Plato's position for Simmel rightly emphasized 'the significance of universals'. Simmel himself is seeking in his sociology (and elsewhere) to reconcile 'the material reality of singular instances with the depth and scope of a formal universality' (1978:202) but by a reverse procedure to Plato. Simmel attempts to distil the essence of social phenomena from singular instances, to view the particular in a manner that sheds light on the universal. This inductive interest in particulars is captured by a statement of a former student, Arthur Salz: 'Simmel dealt with problems sub specie aeternitatis while feigning to deal with them sub specie momenti' (1959:235). Inductivist imagery is somewhat less apparent in Goffman's work. Generally, Goffman conceals his favoured method of 'working up' an analysis or framework, but he

too apparently follows an inductive procedure, as this (possibly overstated) comment from his doctoral dissertation indicates:

'... a false impression is sometimes given that the field data has (sic) been brought in as an afterthought, merely to illustrate concepts earlier arrived at. I should like to make it quite clear that the terms and concepts employed in this study came after and not before the facts.' (1953:9)

This section deals with the central issue of how formal concepts are generated, an issue which in Rex's view 'is probably the most important question that the methodology of sociology has to face if sociologists are to clarify what is, to put it no higher, the most important of their methods' (1971: 31).

As might be expected, Simmel has more to say on this question than Goffman and his remarks are an obvious place to begin, yet even Simmel had no neat set of procedures and could only proceed by analogy to geometry. He admits that there is no unambiguous teachable technique for doing formal sociology, that under certain conditions the distinction between form and content cannot be made at all, and that when it can be accomplished it is both intuitive and somewhat arbitrary. Thus Simmel observes that there will be debate over whether the poor constitute a form of sociation (Simmel, 1965) or whether they should be considered from the standpoint of contents, ie. in terms of economic interests (Simmel, 1909: 308). A parallel dichotomy is evident in much of the criticism of the concept of 'the culture of poverty' which in part turns on the relative significance of 'cultural' and 'situational' explanations of poverty (Hannerz,

1969). Moreover, Simmel repeated emphasizes the relativity and contingency of his analytical operations. For example:

'Throughout, form and content are but relative concepts. They are categories of knowledge to master the phenomena, and to organize them intellectually, so that the same thing which in any one relation, as though looked at from above, appears as form, must be labelled "content" in another relation, as though looked at from below.' (1955:172)

Simmel offers no solutions to what he recognises as serious shortcomings in formal sociology's programme, but he hopes that more systematic procedures will be developed in the future (as indeed they have, as the elaboration of 'analytic induction' and 'grounded theory' indicates).

But these shortcomings should be kept in perspective, for as Simmel observes 'science would be condemned to sterility if, in the presence of new tasks, a completely formulated methodology were the condition of taking the first step.' (1909: 309).

Goffman concurs with Simmel's general sentiment:

'Methodological self-consciousness that is full, immediate and persistent sets aside all study and analysis except that of the reflexive problem itself, thereby displacing fields of enquiry instead of contributing to them.' (1974:12)

All Simmel can do is to suggest that the abstraction of forms is facilitated by the comparative study of widely different contexts. Goffman's predilection for juxtaposing incongruous examples in order to illustrate his concepts and generalisations (the priest who tends to the dying is likened to a con man

cooling out a mark; the psychiatrist is seen as merely a member of a 'tinkering trade') indicates the use of the comparative method, albeit in an unsystematic way. Burkean 'perspective by incongruity' (1965:119) is a common result. Although the comparative method is recommended by Goffman, (eg 1974:564), how and to what extent the method is employed in his analyses is not made explicit. The rhetorical pay-offs of perspective by incongruity appear to take precedence over the prosaic procedures associated with the use of this method.

Formal concepts can be generated by means of the method of analytic induction. This method, which was much debated in Goffman's days as a graduate student (Robinson, 1951; Turner, 1953), was first worked out by Florian Znaniecki in 1934. Znaniecki believed that analytic induction was the master method of the sciences, and he contrasted it with 'enumerative induction' which analysed relationships by means of statistical correlation. Unlike the latter, analytic induction presents universalistic statements about phenomena and is knowledge of a 'complete' and 'exhaustive' kind. As a research procedure, analytic induction does not involve a naive (Millian) inductionism but something much closer to a Popperian conjecture and refutation model. Working hypotheses are corrected by deviant cases and are redefined and reformulated until a universal relationship is established. The virtue of analytic induction is that it emphasises the 'knowledge-building, self-correcting' functions of deviant cases (Robinson, 1951:814)



The constraints of dissertation writing have given us this rare insight into the practicalities of Goffman's formal concept production:

'There was a constant temptation to record only those events which found at the time a neat place in my conceptual organisation, either as confirming or radically disconfirming instances. (Thus, as the conceptual organisation changed, so also did the kinds of facts recorded.)' (1953: 4)

In accord with the method of analytic induction it might be assumed that the occurrence of a negative instance prompted Goffman to develop a new class to accommodate such 'awkward' disconfirming instances. But given that Goffman's procedures of concept formation are largely hidden from view, this must remain mere speculation.

In many qualitative studies the process of concept formation is not available for inspection, presumably because it is deemed to belong to a private realm of theoretical intuition and creativity. Despite the call for researchers to make available natural histories of concept formation (Becker, 1958), this sphere is usually set beyond public scrutiny. It may even be doubted if there are any explicit procedures involved. Often the reader is left with the impression that the concepts come first and that the illustrations are simply added as an afterthought, and this impression is reinforced by the well-nigh impossibility of 'working back' from illustration to concept in formal sociology. Indeed, the reverse situation obtains: the concept

illuminates the example, recasts its sense, thereby making an illustration out of it. Goffman's claim that the concepts do indeed come after and not before the facts is possibly an oversimplification; analytic induction requires an interactional or 'dialectical' relationship between concepts and facts. An indication of the value Goffman places on inductive procedures is conveyed by his complaint that Frame Analysis is 'too bookish, too general, too removed from fieldwork to have a good chance of being anything more than a mentalistic adumbration', and that it is only redeemed in his eyes by the fact that he authored it himself! (1974:13). The further attempt to systematise the procedures of formal concept production made by Glaser and Strauss (1968) seems to have been largely lost on Goffman. His own procedures of concept formation apparently necessitate what Simmel once described as 'the odium of alluding to intuitive processes' (1909: 308).

When considering the problem of concept formation it is worth recalling an aphorism of Merton's: 'if true art consists in concealing all signs of art, true science consists in revealing its scaffolding as well as its finished structure' (1968:70). Critics of a 'positivist' persuasion have accused Simmel's and Goffman's projects of a lack of proper scientificity which they see as ultimately stemming from their 'intuitive' method (eg Durkheim, 1960; idem, 1982; Gamson, 1975). It is certainly true that Simmel's and Goffman's contributions to the problem of concept formation are disappointingly small and that since nearly all qualitative sociology must sooner or later

confront the issue of concept formation it is better, surely, that these issues are openly discussed than treated as an analyst's conjuring trick. An aside: at the Pacific Sociological Association meetings, San Jose, California, March 28-30, 1974, Goffman was invited to participate in a panel discussion on data collection and analysis in qualitative field research. In his oral presentation Goffman stuck doggedly to the task of discussing problems of data collection in field research, thus frustrating earlier expectations that he would also talk on data analysis and concept formation. The mystique surrounding his chosen ways of working was thus preserved. (see Lofland 1974; Davis, 1974; Wiseman, 1974; Cavan, 1974; and Roth 1974 for the contributions of other panelists). The acknowledgement of the arbitrariness of the form-content distinction and the exploratory character of their sociologies is only a partial defence against the complaint that their procedures of concept formation are largely hidden from view.

But it is a complaint that should not be overstated. The articulation of the features of the forms is the primary goal of both Simmel and Goffman who each in their own way recommend that careful attention be given to sociological description. Goffman, in expressing 'grave doubts' about the value of grand and middle range theory, puts the matter this way:

'... I believe that the provision of a single conceptual distinction, if it orders, and illuminates, and reflects delight in the contours of our data, can warrant our claim to be students of society ...what we need ...is a modest but persistent analyticity: frameworks of the lower range' (1981c:34)

If this view is accepted, then the problem of how a concept is produced is immaterial since what will really matter is the articulation of its features to 'illuminate and reflect delight in the contours of our data'. Furthermore the extent of a concept's utility can only be judged by further research. It is salutary to recall Weber's view that 'ideas occur to us when they please, not when it pleases us ...when smoking a cigar on the sofa... (or) when taking a walk on a slowly ascending street' (1948:136).

Thus far the discussion of concept formation has focussed on the production of concepts by Simmel and Goffman. However, there are other issues concerning the character of the concepts thus produced that fall under the heading of concept formation. Although Simmel does attend to the definition of many of his concepts, his central concern is to elaborate a series of arguments which articulate the features of the forms of sociation. In so doing *Simmel sometimes extends the notion of a concept beyond its usual present-day meaning to include something more closely resembling a model* (for example, in the chapter on 'The Poor') - apparently a not uncommon practice in the human sciences in Germany at the turn of the century.

Goffman's concepts tend to be of a 'sensitizing' (Blumer 1969) character. They are designed to alert the sociologist to features of a phenomenon, to provide a general sense of relevance rather than a specific set of empirical referents. Sensitizing concepts are thus neatly tailored to the

needs of an exploratory enterprise like Goffman's. As Cassirer (1957) has observed:

'... each newly acquired concept is an attempt, a beginning, a problem; its value lies not in its copying of definite objects, but in its opening up of an entire problem complex ...In this sense a concept can be fruitful for knowledge long before it is itself exactly defined.' (1957:306, quoted in Roy, 1968:57)

Given the primacy of conceptual innovation in Goffman's enterprise, Cassirer's statement may serve to mitigate if not excuse his occasional conceptual delinquencies. These include his failure to offer definitions of some of the terms in his analytic apparatus (eg 'contest' in 1974:56-58) or the hiding of the meaning of concepts (eg of 'realigning actions' in 1959:190-207). Another difficulty is the problem of 'concept aliases' (Birrell 1978:91) in Goffman's writings where different terms are used for the same concept (eg. 'demeanor' and 'face'; 'encounter', 'focussed gathering', 'face engagement' and 'situated activity system'). Then there is the problem that 'other people's concepts have their names changed' (Phillips 1983:114). The substitution of 'faultable' (in Goffman 1981a) for the conversation analytic term 'repairable' is a good case in point, and to argue that the change was motivated by a wish to maintain consistency with the earlier notion of 'faulty person' in the interests of an ongoing conceptual articulation (Williams, 1988:78-79) is, at best, a charitable interpretation. Imprecision and a dependence upon commonsense rather than analytic notions in the use of such concepts is the price to be paid for these conceptual delinquencies and it is at this point that declarations of exploratory intent begin to wear a little thin.

#### 4.6 The Knowledge-claims of Formal Sociology

The sociologies of Simmel and Goffman are sometimes seen as little more than an expression of an attitude or as whimsical constructions that fail to make a genuine contribution to the scientific study of society. This section presents arguments for a contrary assessment and focuses on three aspects of the knowledge of social life generated by formal sociology: the identification of existential statements, the testing of formal concepts and the presentation of a body of synthetic a priori knowledge. To articulate these issues it is necessary to go beyond Simmel's own discussions, not least because Simmel's 'de-intellectualization' or 'de-cognitivization' of Kant in the sociological sphere often leads to a conflation of epistemological and ontological matters, usually at the expense of careful consideration of the former.

##### 4.6.1 The Identification of Existential Statements

A successful formal sociology can be regarded as presenting a core of 'existential statements' which are not subject to conventional refutation (Harré, 1972; Popper, 1959, esp. section 15). This is perhaps the most fundamental sense in which Goffman's work is genuinely 'innovative'. All that existential statements do is designate a phenomenon, simply state that something exists (cf. Lofland, 1980: 30). One of the accomplishments of 'on face-work' is to inform us of the existence of classes of interactional phenomena such as 'faces', 'face-saving practices', 'threats' and so on and in so doing new

social objects are constructed and brought to the forefront of our awareness (Jameson 1976:125). Of course, formal sociology goes beyond this to specify the characteristics and relations between those elements that existential statements draw to our attention, but minimally it shows us the existence of such social practices which we would otherwise remain unaware of scientifically, and it is in this light that Goffman's stated aim of describing the natural units of interaction and uncovering the normative order within and between such units (1967:1-2) must be seen.

Taken singly, existential statements cannot be falsified: it is difficult to conceive of the empirical refutation of a statement like 'there are face-saving practices' because it is not limited in space and time. In themselves, of course, formal concepts cannot be falsified, for as Coser has observed in a book heavily indebted to Simmel, 'concepts may be thought of as being neither true nor false; they are apt or inept, clear or vague, fruitful or useless'. Quoting Merton he continues, 'they are tools designed to capture relevant aspects of reality and thus "constitute the definitions (or prescriptions) of what is to be observed"' (Coser, 1956: 7).

As existential statements formal concepts play a very fundamental role in science: they are the solid foundation upon which shifting and developing scientific hypotheses and theories are constructed. For Harré they preserve 'the permanent advances of science' and express its 'permanent empirical part' (Harré,

1972: 52). But they are also open to refinement and improvement in the course of further empirical inquiries.

#### 4.6.2 The Testing of Formal Concepts

This brings us to the issue of empirical corroboration for the knowledge claims of formal sociology. Positivist critics of Simmel and Goffman (eg. Durkheim, 1960; Argyle, 1969) suggest that the absence of clear, testable hypotheses and systematically-collected data is a major flaw of their sociologies. Simmel explicitly opposed the positivist ambition for sociology of formulating knowledge of social life in the shape of law-like generalisations. In the final chapter of Sociology Simmel recognises that his analytical procedure shifts from the earlier articulation of the properties of the forms to the development of propositions about the relation between group expansion and individuality. But these propositions should not be misconstrued as law-like generalisations. Writing of one such proposition Simmel says:

'... this is not a sociological "natural law", but rather what might be called a phenomenological formula that seeks to conceptualize the regular outcome of regularly coexisting sequences of events. It designates no cause of phenomena; instead, it designates a single phenomenon whose underlying, general structure is represented in each individual case as the effect of very diverse causes, but causes whose combined effect is always to release identical formative energies' (1971:257)

Similarly, in his chapter on subordination and superordination Simmel again denies that he is seeking law-like generalisations,



disavowing any concern with 'constructing dogmatically one-sided series' in favour of 'presenting basic processes whose infinitely varying extents and combinations often cause their superficial manifestations to contradict one another' (1950:194). He also regards as incoherent the idea of 'historical laws' (Simmel 1977:ch.2). As we have seen in Section 2.5 Goffman likewise has little sympathy for the positivist ambition for sociology.

However, the flaw as positivists see it of an absence of testable propositions, may be readily remedied by the translation of the observations of formal sociologists into 'If ... then' propositions which can be tested in the usual way. This was the fate of some of Simmel's ideas in the 1950s and 60s (eg. Coser, 1956; Caplow, 1968) and there are signs that social psychologists are nowadays appropriating Goffman in much the same way (see, eg. Arkin, 1980; Schlenkler, 1980). Now, whilst there can be no objection to the use of Simmel and Goffman as sources of insight for the generation of testable hypotheses, it should be noted that this is not the only kind of empirical corroboration of formal sociology possible.

Nevertheless, the absence of testable hypotheses does attract wide-spread suspicion, sometimes from unlikely sources. The philosophers Louch (1966) and Cioffi (1971) fix upon this absence, and both find the same nefarious motive at work in Goffman's analyses: moral persuasion. Louch criticises Goffman's avowed aim of establishing conceptual frameworks or perspectives under which diverse facts may be subsumed as follows: 'he avoids

the self-defeating property of the generalisation, "Everyone's play-acting", by raising it to methodological status and immunity from falsification ... methodological immunity is bought at the price of significance' (1966: 215-16). Cioffi is just as dismissive. Studies like Goffman's that are not readily amenable to falsification are simply the work of 'story-tellers posing as theorists' (1971: 107). He considers Goffman's findings to be truistic, amounting to nothing more than the re-viewing of activities we comprehend perfectly well already. The ostensible rationale for Goffman's method, the giving of information and explanations, has no firm evidential basis. Cioffi's uncompromising view is that readers aid and abet the authors of these 'surveys'. 'The mind craves' their synoptic power, even though we do not possess any clear criteria of their 'objectivity' or 'success'. *For this reason Cioffi suspects that this work is 'not a prolegomenon to any scientific advance', not exploratory in character, but an end in itself - an enterprise approved by our pervasive need for a stable and coherent perspective on the world.*

Both Louch and Cioffi fly from one extreme to the other: since Goffman's work does not meet the scientific standard of falsifiability, it must be treated as on a par with the work of creative writers. (Notice that Louch asks that dramaturgy be assessed in terms of aesthetic criteria.) Both rely upon a drastically overdrawn implicit conception of 'art' and 'science' which an unexplicated formal sociology may invite but does not deserve. But when assessed in the light of a less overdrawn

bifurcation it becomes possible to arrive at some altogether more positive conclusions about Goffman's work. Although Cioffi and Louch correctly argue that formal concepts cannot be overthrown by the usual procedures of falsification and thus that formal concepts are self-validating in the sense that they are validated only by the examples which illustrate them, they mistakenly conclude that no more systematic testing of these concepts is possible.

Cioffi's complaint that the wealth of illustrations present in Goffman's work are no more than 'idle wheels' whose only role is moral persuasion plainly misrepresents their purpose. The illustrations validate the concept by showing its empirical relevance. The illustrations alert us to the potential utility of the concept. The illustrations cited by Simmel and Goffman are a first and elementary type of testing.

Further testing of formal concepts can only derive from empirical research, as Goffman is well aware. Goffman agrees that his work is 'full of unverified assertions' which can only be 'established' by 'systematic empirical research'. But this should not be seen as a shortcoming since 'a loose speculative approach to a fundamental area of conduct is better than a rigorous blindness to it' (1963:4-5). Nor should we be misled by the more ethnographically-precise character of Goffman's illustrations compared to those of Simmel, for verisimilitude is not at stake. All that is required of his illustrations is that they show that his concepts have some empirical reference and can

thus be taken seriously. True, Goffman often felt it necessary to point out the deficiencies of his data (1959:xi; 1963a: 5; 1971:xvii; 1974:14; 1979:26) but his disclaimers seem to indicate if not confusion about of the difference between illustrations and evidence, at least some tendency to impose standards deriving from the latter upon the former . If these somewhat superfluous reservations are set aside, Goffman is revealed to possess an articulate grasp of the point of his illustrations. In Frame Analysis human interest stories are drawn upon as illustrations because,

'Each is a cross between an experimentum crucim and a sideshow. That is their point. The design of these reported events is fully responsive to our demands - which are not for facts but for typifications. Their telling demonstrates the power of our conventional understandings to cope with the bizarre potentials of social life, the furthest reaches of our experience.

... By and large, I do not present these anecdotes, therefore, as evidence or proof, but as clarifying depictions, as frame fantasies which manage, through the hundred liberties taken by their tellers, to celebrate our beliefs about the workings of the world.' (1974:14-15)

Similarly, recourse to 'cartoons, comics, novels and the cinema' and to 'sociological journalism' is justified as follows:

'My excuse for dipping into this pre-empted domain is that I have a special interest, one that does not recognise a difference in value between a good novel and a bad one, a contemporary play or an ancient one, a comic strip or an opera. All are equally useful in explicating the character of strips of experienced activity.' (1974:15)

As Goffman puts it, his cited examples are responsive to his demands and the primary one is simply that they illustrate and thus show the relevance of his concepts.

To his statements of exploratory and preliminary intent must be added his comment in Presentation, that the book might serve as 'a guide worth testing in case-studies of institutional social life' (1959:xii). As a corpus of existential statements, Goffman's work can be seen as a source of seminal influence and insight. The use that is made of his formal concepts and generalizations by researchers constitutes their further corroboration. We may speak here of 'testing out' (cf. 1981a:1) rather than testing in its more usual sense. Researchers who employ Goffman's formal concepts test them out by showing their scope, ubiquity, empirical necessity, and precision in reference to particular areas of empirical investigation (eg. Ditton, 1977; Strong, 1979). It is this work that we must turn to in order to discover how fruitful or otherwise Goffman's concepts may be: as Goffman once put it, 'none of the concepts elaborated (here) may have a future' (1981a:1).

Indeed, both Goffman and Simmel insist upon the provisional nature of their concepts and the possibility of revision and improvement. These revisions may result from further formal analyses, from ethnographic work or from the more orthodox testing of concepts within hypothetico-deductive formulations. Of course, Goffman's frameworks can stand alone on their own merits. However, as far as the testing of these concepts is

concerned, the main burden of responsibility lies with those further studies undertaken on the basis of Goffman's concepts and generalisations. In the last analysis only the uses of Goffman's work can provide the most sustained corroboration of his formal sociology.

The argument in this section is that both Simmel's and Goffman's sociology is sensitised to the distinction between evidence and illustrations and that the illustrative status of their empirical materials is consonant with their relatively modest endeavour of conceptual articulation. A separate issue is their predilection for invented, fictitious examples. How is this to be justified? A neglected footnote from Simmel is worth quoting at length.

"If the communication of social facts were one of the purposes of this volume, even though only secondary, the latitude given to undemonstrated statements and errors that has just been implied would be inadmissible. But in the present attempt at eliciting from social life the possibility of a new scientific abstraction, the essential aim can only be the achievement of this abstraction by means of any examples whatever, and thus the proof that it makes sense. If, for the sake of methodological clarification I should express the matter in a somewhat exaggerated fashion, I would say that the only importance of the examples is that they are possible, and less that they are real. For, their truth is not (or only in a few cases) designed to demonstrate the truth of a general proposition. Rather, even where some expression might not indicate it, they are only the object of an analysis; and the object itself is irrelevant. It is the correct and fruitful manner of performing this analysis, not the truth about the reality of its object, which is either achieved here or not. The investigation could be carried out even on the basis of fictitious examples, whose importance for the interpretation of reality could be left to the reader's accidental knowledge of fact." (1950:88-89n1)

In order to exemplify a formal concept, an illustration needs to be, first of all, possible, and the reader's own knowledge will figure in the achievement of this possibility. Equally, the reader may not find the example a telling illustration of a concept; a situation which Cioffi (1971:130) describes as 'I lose if you say I have lost'. Moreover, an important thrust of formal sociology is to organise the commonsense knowledge of the reader as member of society and in that task fictitious examples take their place. But the adequacy of fictitious examples as illustrations is strictly limited to the exploratory context of identifying the properties of the forms; beyond that exploratory context, the staking out of new social objects in the forms set by Simmel's and Goffman's analyses (eg 'discretion' or 'response cries'), fictitious examples have obvious deficiencies. In Goffman's case the point has been sharply made by conversation analysis-inspired criticism (Helm, 1982; Watson, 1983; Schegloff, 1988) which has exposed the serious limitations of invented examples for any systematic and empirical sociology of talk. Fictitious examples are 'responsive to our demands - which are not for facts but for typifications' (Goffman, 1974:14) but beyond the exploratory context a demand for actualities and not possibilities becomes imperative.

#### 4.6.3 Formal Sociology as a Body of Synthetic A Priori Knowledge

Lastly, let us consider the status of the knowledge presented by the formal sociologies of Simmel and Goffman. It is

suggested at least some part of their work can be considered as presenting a body of synthetic a priori knowledge. This suggestion owes its origin to Simmel's acknowledged inspiration, Kant. However Simmel, in eliding ontological and epistemological questions in his programmatic essays, does not explicitly explore this possibility. What makes this omission all the more striking is Simmel's frequent comparison of formal sociology with geometry, since for Kant (Euclidean) geometry stood as a major exemplar of synthetic a priori knowledge.

Kant's argument ran thus: beyond the two widely recognised types of knowledge - analytic knowledge which is known a priori, and synthetic knowledge which is known a posteriori - it could be demonstrated that it was possible to derive a third, less obvious type of knowledge. Synthetic a priori knowledge consisted of 'judgements whose predicates are not contained in their subjects and which yet are logically independent of all judgements describing sense experience' (Körner, 1955: 20). Thus synthetic a priori knowledge is both factual, referring to the empirical world, yet also universal, necessary and independent of any particular experiences. The classic example of this kind of proposition is 'every change has a cause', which is a synthetic statement referring to events in the world, and is also a priori, since no description of sense experience is entailed.

Consideration of the conjecture that aspects of formal sociology comprise a corpus of synthetic a priori knowledge may best proceed by examination of Simmel's ideas on the dyad and



triad. Since the quantitative aspects of social life most closely follow the geometrical analogy, it is the example which best illustrates the synthetic a priori character of Simmel's sociology. For the participants there is a critical difference between membership of a dyad and membership of larger collectivities, because the dyad 'does not attain that super-personal life which the individual feels to be independent of himself. As soon, however, as there is a sociation of three a group continues to exist even when one of its members drops out' (1950:123). This statement is synthetic, not analytic in character, for it does not simply elucidate the meaning of the terms dyad, triad and group persistence, but specifies certain factual states of affairs. It is a priori because it is logically independent of any particular description of experience. In interpreting Simmel's sociology in terms of its synthetic a priori character attention is drawn to the following features: (a) its statements have a universal reference: they state certain features that will be true of all dyads and deserted triads; (b) these universally true features are not simply logical in character but refer to empirical states of affairs; (c) yet they are independent of particular empirical information for their truth.

Clearly, the scope of the generalisations presented by formal sociology varies. Simmel's most widely applicable statement is found in the sociological apriorities. There are also variations in the scope of the forms of sociation. For example, Simmel considers the forms of subordination and

superordination to be present in nearly every instance of sociation whereas other forms apply to very specific circumstances, such as Simmel's analyses of social types like 'The Stranger' and 'The Poor'. But whatever their scope, all the forms attempt to enunciate certain universal features of social phenomena, ie. they state something about, say, the inherent possibilities of triadic relationships which is true of all triads.

A characteristically more convoluted example may be drawn from 'On face-work' where Goffman is discussing the way interactants may engage in aggressive face-work. An interactant may present himself in an unduly modest way in the expectation that others will then praise him; this is a method of 'fishing for compliments'. Or the interactant may deliberately offend another secure in the knowledge that the others will accept his response that he was 'only joking'. Cases like this are covered by the generalisation:

'Every face-saving practice which is allowed to neutralise a particular threat opens up the possibility that the threat will be wilfully introduced for what can be safely gained by it' (1967:24).

This statement (a) indicates a possibility universal to every encounter where face-saving is successfully accomplished, (b) describes an empirical state of affairs, and (c) does not logically depend for its truth on whatever empirical information we may have about particular instances in which the manipulative exploitation of face-saving practices occurred.

Note that this generalization simply refers to possibilities that inhere in the 'logic' of face-saving. As in the case of Simmel's discussion of dyads and triads, the possibilities are not always clearly set out. Since the determination of the precise theoretical status of the generalizations found throughout Goffman's work has scarcely begun (undoubtedly they are, like the 'illustrative materials' of Presentation, of 'mixed status'), it is difficult to assess what proportion of the whole might be characterised in synthetic a priori terms, but at the very minimum the basic ideas on expressivity (Goffman's version of the 'sociological a priorities', 4.2 above) and the conceptual core (the concepts of occasion, situation, gathering and frame) appear to qualify for consideration in these terms. Here we encounter a methodological restriction inherent in Goffman's essayism: it does not permit him to proceed sufficiently far beyond the well-ordered enunciation of existential statements towards a clear specification of the relative significance and generality of the phenomena he identifies. Some phenomenologically-inspired criticism of Goffman has identified this shortcoming (Psathas and Waksler, 1973). Goffman's ideas on the characteristics of the encounter (physical copresence, a single focus of attention, the maximisation of visual monitoring of another, the awareness of another's consciousness of oneself are presented in shopping list-like fashion (see Goffman, 1961b:17-18; 1963:13-18); no attempt is made to determine which of these features are necessary, a priori elements of encounters generally and which

may be merely contingent. In this respect, Goffman's work can be unfavourably compared to that of conversation analysis, which displays a much greater concern for systematising its generalisations. It has been proposed that some of conversation analysis's findings (ie. the general properties of adjacency pairs) can be considered to constitute a corpus of synthetic a priori knowledge claims about the sequential organisation of conversation (see Coulter, 1983). A difficulty in extending the proposal to Simmel and Goffman lies in the absence of clearly-presented generalizations in their work.

#### 4.7 Conclusion: From Fortituous Fragments to Conceptual Frameworks

This chapter has considered some of the contributions made by Simmel and Goffman to sociology as a body of scientific knowledge about society. However it must readily be acknowledged that their work is just as frequently seen as exemplifying, in Nisbet's (1976) rather overworked phrase, 'sociology as an art form'. Simmel was deeply interested in the history and philosophy of art and the recent monograph by Frisby (1981) characterises his entire analytical style and mode of presentation as a kind of 'sociological impressionism'. Some of the issues arising from the 'sociology as an art form' characterisation of Simmel's and Goffman's writings will be addressed more fully in the following chapter, 'Textual Persuasion'. At this point there is value in introducing some of

Simmel's observations on art in order to underline certain comparisons with Goffman's analytic aims.

For Simmel the attitude of the artist 'is based upon the assumption that the inner significance of things adequately reveals itself in their appearance, if only this appearance is seen correctly and completely' (1950:296). The artistic method which Simmel carries into his sociology endeavours to universalise from the particular since:

'The essential meaning of art lies in its being able to form an autonomous totality, a self-sufficient microcosm out of a fortitious fragment of reality that is tied with a thousand threads to this reality' (1978:495)

The starting point of both Simmel's and Goffman's sociologies is the 'fortitious fragment', the small and commonplace observation about social life, rather than the social totality or social structure. From these fragments essential elements or general patterns of social organisation are derived. In this way they present us with snapshots of social life viewed sub specie aeternitatis.

The suggestion that Simmel's and Goffman's work embodies a basic analytical procedure which is at one with artistic production need not, however, lead to a dismissal of their sociologies as unscientific. To begin with, it has been proposed that any characterisation of science as an enterprise run according to fixed, universal rules is unrealistic, pernicious and detrimental to science itself (Feyerabend, 1975). Scientific knowledge can take various forms: not only causal laws, but also

lists, stories, concepts, and dramatic accounts can qualify (Feyerabend 1988:163-166). As this chapter has argued, an overdrawn conception of 'science' and 'art' is unproductive and to be avoided. Moreover, it is misleading to simply describe their work as 'sociology as an art form', for as Weber (1948:137) reminds us, in science there is progress in a sense that is not true of art. Both Simmel and Goffman in their programmatic statements indicate their commitment to the scientific study of society, even if their views about the progress of sociology are somewhat muted and qualified. Simmel, for example, draws upon a distinctly artistic notion of adequacy in stating at the beginning of Sociology that:

'... nothing more can be attempted than the establishment of the beginning and direction of an infinitely long road - the pretension to any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at the very least, illusory. Perfection can be obtained here by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see' (1959 a:336)

Goffman similarly urged sociologists 'all we can do... is to keep faith with the spirit of natural science, seriously kidding ourselves that our rut has a forward direction' (1983a:2). Nevertheless, it can be proposed that Goffman's work stands closer to the scientific pole than does Simmel's.

The difference between the two is primarily presentational. As Simmel himself acknowledges (1971:251), his usual procedure is to employ formal concepts as a peg around which he can construct a collection of arguments. It is not always easy for the reader

to follow the arguments or appreciate their connection with the formal concept. Simmel's major contribution to formal sociology, his Sociology, is usually thought of as a series of more or less discrete substantive analyses of forms of sociation such as the dyad and triad, superordination and subordination, conflict, the poor, the stranger, the nobility and so forth which is only held together by the formal method. On this view Simmel is even more open than Weber to Parsons' (1947) 'type atomism' criticism (Levine, 1971: xxix-xxxii). Now whilst Simmel's approach shows that it may not be possible to systematise the forms with the same clarity, degree of elegance and parsimony as geometrical theorems, this does not mean that it is impossible to systematise the forms at all. On the contrary, the forms can be interrelated in a coherent and internally consistent conceptual framework. By this means Goffman's studies are at least partially inured against 'type atomism' objections. Moreover, Goffman's frameworks embed formal concepts into a conceptual theory ('dramaturgy' or some variant of it such as his 'sociological apriorities' outlined above).

Even the most casual perusal of Goffman's writings reveals that the production of elaborate, well-structured conceptual frameworks which organise the relations between formal concepts is a central objective. It is, however, an aim that runs the risk of producing a narrow, static, merely classificatory sociology. Goffman avoids producing a mere taxonomy of formal concepts by developing the frameworks around a particular problem; for example, in Stigma, the relations between the

category of stigma and the individual's social identity. Since all of Goffman's frameworks are fleshed out around some interactional problem, the 'formalist misunderstanding' (Tenbruck, 1959) should not arise. The interactional problem provides a 'dynamic' for the framework, as can be seen in Goffman's 'Conclusion' to Presentation:

'This framework is formal and abstract in the sense that it can be applied to any social establishment; it is not, however, merely a static classification. The framework bears upon dynamic issues created by the motivation to sustain a definition of the situation that has been projected before others.' (1959:239)

Although there are some marked variations, many of the frameworks possess an impressive architecture and Goffman usually succeeds in striking an appropriate balance between indulgent essayism that Simmel sometimes stands accused of and the arid formalism that is sometimes seen as his legacy to post-war German sociology. On balance, then, Goffman's style is less 'fragmentary' than Simmel's; it has a clearer orientation, fewer inconsistencies and clearer specifications of its concepts. But as Axelrod (1977) has argued, Simmel's own stylistic 'deficiencies' can be justified by his preferred relevances; the value attached to individualism and his view of science as an 'adventure' that involves taking chances. Against this, Goffman's more architectural tendencies indicate a greater willingness to press his essayism into the service of the unified paradigms of the scientific community. Goffman's sociology, then, displays a systematic intent but no desire to build a



systematic, general theory of interaction. That, presumably, is one implication of his comment 'better, perhaps, different coats to clothe the children well than a single splendid tent in which they all shiver' (1961a:xiv).

## CHAPTER 5

## TEXTUAL PERSUASION

5.1 Resources for Logics of Discovery

Although the formal sociologies of Simmel and Goffman do not neatly fit into the established paradigms and schools of conventional sociology, the previous chapter argued that there are grounds for considering them to make a genuine contribution to sociology conceived as the scientific study of society. It is important to insist upon this contribution because there is a common tendency to regard the absence of conformity to the canons of established perspectives as grounds for relegating their work to the interesting but ultimately inconsequential category of 'sociology as an art form'. This complaint, let it be noted, can come cloaked in the most laudable terms. Thus Eliot Friedson maintains that 'Goffman's work lives and will live not as a contribution to the development of systematic sociological theory but rather as a contribution to human consciousness' (1983:361). Friedson continues 'to take Goffman as a source for abstract and systematic theory is false to the substance and spirit of his work' (ibid). Similar responses greeted Simmel's sociology (eg von Wiese, 1965:56-57; Bouglé, 1965:63). The previous chapter argued that the overdrawn conceptions of science and art on which such judgements rest are mistaken. Nevertheless, it must be readily admitted that the work of Simmel and Goffman possesses a distinctive style and persuasiveness that engenders an affinity

with artistic production and it is these aspects of their work which will be reviewed in this chapter.

The chapter considers an integral part of Simmel's and Goffman's method: its rhetoric, that is, the methods or strategies of communication, explanation and persuasion they employ in order to advance their analytical claims and make them accessible and plausible to the reader. As readers of these texts, we are persuaded of the adequacy, plausibility, attractiveness, correctness, *judiciousness etc* of the claims they present simply on the basis of resources indigenous to the texts themselves. Why are these texts so widely regarded as fascinating, appealing, convincing and arresting? A solution must be sought in how the texts assemble and present sociological analyses, for that can be the only source of whatever rhetorical power they possess. Simmel's and Goffman's persuasiveness is a thoroughly textual accomplishment. Only a part, and perhaps a small part, of the reader's acceptance of Simmel's and Goffman's analyses may rest upon the kinds of scientific criteria considered in the previous chapter (although these criteria too function as a rhetoric). Thus this chapter explores the 'artistic' aspect of their sociological method referred to by many commentators; for example, von Wiese's characterisation of Simmel's sociology as 'the sociology of an aesthete, a sociology for the literary salon' (1965:56) or the common characterisation of Goffman's 'literary' or 'socio-literary method' (Anderson et al, 1985; Manning, 1976). Rather than regarding these artistic elements as somehow compromising their contributions to

sociology, this chapter will take it as axiomatic that they perform important analytical and persuasive functions.

Previous chapters have emphasised Simmel's and Goffman's commitments to a logic of discovery and an essentially exploratory approach to the investigation of the forms of sociation and the interaction order. Their relatively sketchy programmatics are allied to this broad purpose. As Kaplan has observed:

'Excessive effort can be directed from substantive to methodological problems so that we are forever perfecting how to do something without ever getting round to doing it even imperfectly. Not a little behavioural science has a markedly programmatic character, traceable to its methodological sophistication... it is likely to be deficient in exploiting the real possibilities of the scientific situation. By pressing methodological norms too far we may inhibit bold and imaginative adventures of ideas.'  
(1964:25)

As we shall see, both Simmel and Goffman draw upon artistic resources to advance their logics of discovery. This chapter will examine four aspects of these resources: the attitude of the observer, the textual formats employed by each writer, their use of metaphor and analogy, and their favoured textual tropes.

This tendency is very fully evident in Simmel who had a lifelong interest in the arts and who wrote extensively on artistic topics and artists, including Dante, Michaelangelo, Rembrandt, da Vinci, Stefan George, and Rodin. He was personally acquainted with George, Rodin and Rilke and associated with the Jugendstil movement at the turn of the century. He married a

painter and erstwhile novelist, Gertrud Kinel, and was deeply involved with the art historian and critic, Gertrud Kantorowicz (see Kantorowicz, 1959 and 1961). Moreover, Simmel's central categories, form and content, are also part of the basic terminology of aesthetic appreciation. As Arthur Salz, a student of Simmel's at the turn of the century noted 'whoever speaks of forms moves in the field of aesthetics. Society, in the last analysis, is a work of art' (1959:236).

Less is known about Goffman's artistic interests. But it is clear from the footnotes to his writings that he was an avid reader of fiction, knowledgeable about the theatre, and was familiar with some branches of literary criticism. In particular, the work of the literary critic, Kenneth Burke, made an early and lasting imprint through his notion of 'perspective by incongruity' and the dramatic pentad (Burke, 1968). Burke is cited in Goffman's Master's dissertation and Winkin (1988:30) reports that Goffman read and re-read Permanence and Change (1935) and A Grammar of Motives (1945) during his early days at Chicago. The artistic aspect of Goffman's intellectual production is nicely captured in the title of MacIntyre's (1969) article on Presentation: 'The self as work of art'.

As was indicated in Chapter 1, Simmel's aestheticism was recognised by his contemporaries and was seen by some, such as Durkheim (see above, 1.5.8 and ch.4, passim), to vitiate the claims of his sociology to any serious scientific standing. The issue of concern here, however, is how that aestheticism

facilitated the development of Simmel's analyses and enhanced the communication of his ideas to his readers. Murray Davis (1973) indicates three features of Simmel's aestheticism which figure in his sociological analyses. Notwithstanding his interest in drama (cf section 3.4 above) and his early ethnomusicological study, Davis claims there is a visual bias in Simmel's approach to art which goes some way towards accounting for his atemporal conception of the forms and his fascination for the geometrical analogy in his sociology. Secondly, Simmel's conception of art as a province autonomous from life, which has affinity with the 'art for art's sake' aesthetics popular in Europe at the turn of the century, is a notion which connects with his more general theory of the tragedy of culture. More broadly there are connections with his view of the world as comprising many distinct unities or centres of organisation, including not only art but also the individual, the society, the adventure and so on. Davis's suggestion here reformulates one argument of Chapter 4, that Simmel's de-intellectualisation or decognitivation of Kant is designed to make manifest the structuring principles informing each of these centres of organisation. The third way in which Simmel's aesthetics figure in his sociology is through his conception of the artistic method, which he regards as an attempt to comprehend the universal from the particular. Here Davis draws upon the 1896 essay 'Sociological aesthetics' which contains Simmel's important statement about the 'essence of aesthetic observation and interpretation'. This 'lies in the fact that the typical is to be found in what is unique, the

law-like in what is fortuitous, the essence and significance of things in the superficial and transitory' (quoted in Frisby 1984:64; this is Frisby's own translation and is slightly clearer than the translation used in section 1.4 above). As we have seen in Chapter 4, it is from these particulars and 'fortuitous fragments' that the universal features of forms of sociation are derived, Simmel's 'snapshots sub specie aeternitatis'. In this respect the method of the sociologist, as Simmel conceives of it, is no different to that of the artist. Davis (1973:327) makes the intriguing suggestion that this process involves a 'sudden leap' rather than a careful working through of inductive logic, thus shedding further light on the absence of clear comparative and inductive procedures of concept formation in both Simmel and Goffman (section 4.5 above). Thus, there is a harmony between Simmel's conception of artistic and sociological method.

The point can be pressed further. For Simmel method is equivalent to style in art and thus ultimately non-reproducible (Frisby, 1981:78, 89). Whilst it is possible for others to do formal sociology in the manner of Simmel or Goffman there is, strictly speaking, no method that will enable others to do sociology exactly as Simmel and Goffman accomplish it. In this sense their method is an artistic style. Yet, as Chapter 4 attempted to show, their method as artistic style is not all a matter of intuition, creativity and genius; certain of its bases can be analysed. And so it is too with their artistic style as method; this chapter is concerned to unpack some of its features.

## 5.2 The Attitude of the Observer

One point of entry to Simmel and Goffman's artistic styles is through Simmel's notion of the 'attitude' of the human observer and thinker. Simmel starts from the Kantian position that knowledge of the world is conditioned and realised by human consciousness and argues that from the 'ultimate point of the self... emanate those rays which, as they encompass the world, make the world a world' (1959c:295). But that world is only a portion of the totality, a sector extracted from the whole. Margarete Susman glosses Simmel's argument as follows:

'This relationship of the individual to the totality Simmel termed the "attitude" of the thinker. This attitude signifies for him the relationship of a mind to the totality of the world.' (quoted in Frisby, 1985:52)

A view of the world thus depends upon the constitution of the personality of the observer and it reflects 'the peculiarity of its possessor much more than the objective image of any particular thing' (Simmel, 1959c:294, emphasis in original). Knowledge of the world, for Simmel, rests upon the personal attitude of the observer more than the world's 'objective' properties.

For his part Goffman likewise emphasises the perspectival character of his analyses of social life, speaking of their selectivity and arbitrariness and never forcefully insisting upon their adequacy or the definitiveness of his starting points. The disclaimers include:



'... I must be allowed to proceed by picking my span and level arbitrarily, without special justification... I will initially assume the right to pick my point of view, my motivational relevancies...' (1974:8-9)

'So I ask that these papers be taken for what they merely are: exercises, trials, tryouts, a means of displaying possibilities, not establishing facts.' (1981a:1)

As was noted in Chapter 4, these remarks are rooted in the neoKantian conception of knowledge. But they make it clear that for Goffman, as for Simmel, there is an arbitrary and ultimately personal starting point for the generation of a necessarily selective body of knowledge about the social world stemming from the 'attitude' of the observer.

The notion of the attitude of the observer also implies that an evaluative element will unavoidably figure in the analysis, for it denies that there is any neutral and objective standpoint from which reality can be viewed. Consequently, the observer's ethical preferences - social and political, moral and emotional - will be built into the analysis, often in subtle and complex ways. The ethical preferences of Simmel and Goffman defy short and simple characterisation. In their maturity, neither expressed much interest in politics, still less a distinct political orientation. Simmel's ethical preferences spring from a concern to maximise human freedom and a respect for life's interests and energies in the face of the potentially stultifying effects of forms. In Goffman's writings there is a deep concern for human dignity coupled with a thorough ambivalence about the rules of the interaction order which serve to protect and also to

undermine that dignity (hence his tacit endorsement of those who disrupt orderly interaction). These evaluative aspects of the attitude of the observer are rhetorically communicated in their texts.

How is the attitude of the observer carried forward into Simmel's sociological studies? Frisby's (1981) suggestion that Simmel represents a kind of 'sociological flâneur' is an instructive starting point. Citing Walter Benjamin's definition of the flâneur as someone 'who goes botanizing on the asphalt' (ibid:78), Frisby describes Simmel's observer role as like that of the stroller through the city who wanders through a variety of social situations which are invariably seen at a distance. The flâneur is a watcher who remains safely detached from whatever is witnessed. The world is interpreted from a distance. The flâneur's insights may arouse the interests of his readers but they do not fundamentally disturb them because for the flâneur it is the observation of situations and types of person, not remedies or prescriptions, which are primary.

Much of the informal observational material which fill Goffman's books and papers suggest a correspondence with the flâneur. For all Goffman's enthusiastic recommendation of close naturalistic inquiry and standing close to the subjects of study, the resulting analysis is cool and detached from the pleasures and pains of the persons populating his illustrations. That does not, however, prevent Goffman from taking his own moral stance, as is amply evident in Asylums, Stigma and 'The insanity of

place', but it is very much Goffman's moral stance rather than that of any identifiable constituency of persons.

The model of the flâneur suggests an observer who collects fragments of social life in a relatively unsystematic way, 'strolling' through the city streets and the highways and byways of urban life. Goffman is unquestionably a modern master of the technique. In his books and papers he displays a remarkable facility for turning ordinary events witnessed in his own everyday life into data to illustrate his sociological ideas. Two examples will be mentioned from the literally hundreds that could be cited. In the course of developing an argument that many features of interpersonal style can be interpreted in accordance with the line required by a particular frame, Goffman describes in some detail the cute expressive behaviour of an air hostess he once observed who found that her coffee jug was empty when there were still passengers to be served (1974:574-575). Goffman argues that something deeper than mere role performance is going on: a set of trained frame expectations are being realised. Goffman concludes: 'whenever we are issued a uniform, we are likely to be issued with a skin' (ibid:575). The second example concerns the glance discipline demanded of patrons of restaurants that employ topless waitresses; while being served they are required to exercise particular care with their eyes. Goffman's droll observation is simply 'when bodies are naked, glances are clothed' (1971:46).

Goffman possesses a rare capacity to unremittingly subject instances of encounters he has witnessed to sociological analysis. Bennett Berger recounts the following story which sheds some light on this capacity:

'At the 1972 meetings of the American Sociological Association Goffman and I were asked by a group of women to join them in a sit-in attempt to desegregate a hotel dining room that served only men at lunch. We went along. As we were sitting there at a large table with a group of women, I asked him if he was *doing this* out of principle or out of impulse. "Impulse", he said, then, "but once you do something, you've got to begin to think about it".' (1973:356-357)

Similarly, Dell Hymes comments on Goffman's ability to perceive behavioural norms of which others were unaware:

'He made of this gift a life in which joy and anger were inseparable. Joy in the increasing mastery of the gift and the finding of a world in which it was valued; anger first perhaps at a way of being in the world that could never leave the world unobserved, and later, perhaps, as a modulated defense of the gift itself, of its free innocence of eye. A modulated defense too, perhaps, of seriousness. The rest of us might assimilate experience of Erving's gift to such manageable genres as wit and anecdote. For him it was life itself.' (1984:628)

For Goffman it appears that the role of sociological observer as flâneur was not to be donned and doffed at will.

The notion of the detached flâneur also assists the comprehension of Goffman's more sustained spells of participant observation. He undertook several of these in the course of his career: in Shetland Isle; at St Elizabeth's Hospital; observation of surgical operations (reported in 'Role distance'); his work as

a croupier at Las Vegas; and his study of classical music DJs (reported in 'Radio talk'). In all these cases the reader is provided with a minimal amount of information about his research experiences even where, as in several of these investigations, the research spanned an extensive period of time. Goffman manages to purge his accounts of most of the particularities of his research experience, leading one commentator to observe of the Asylums research that it presents 'a world populated by faceless people and studied by a faceless research worker' (Fairbrother, 1977:363). Plainly, the detached flâneur of the interaction order is a model that can be considered deficient from the point of view of alternative models of ethnographic practice which stress the input of the particularities of the ethnographer's experience into the completed ethnographic account. But if Hymes is to be believed about 'Erving's gift', an attitude of the observer that was deeply enmeshed in his personal reality, then it is small wonder that his writings display the air of detachment characteristic of the flâneur. And as Simmel notes in his excursus 'The stranger' (1950:404), distance from observed events does not necessarily imply passivity and detachment but it is a precondition of 'objectivity'.

A last point worth making concerning the notion of the flâneur as one who goes 'botanising on the asphalt' is its association with naturalism as conceived by Goffman. Naturalism in this sense has its origins in the practices of the nineteenth century precursor of modern biology, natural history.

Practitioners of natural history were primarily concerned with the description and classification of animal and plant species and the practice has been carried forward into the modern discipline. Both Simmel and Goffman's sociologies are descriptive and classificatory in this sense, and both regard this as a task not to be slighted. Indeed, the botanical analogy is recognised by Goffman who once suggested (in personal communication cited in Strong, 1988:229-230) that 'working like a one-armed botanist is what a social naturalist unashamedly has to do'. The biological model of science provides an alternative to physics which usually stands as the exemplary model of investigation for many concerned about sociology's scientific status, and it has proved to be a model especially conducive to ethnographic sociology (see, eg, Whyte 1984:268-274). Thus Goffman's attitude of the observer can be regarded as rooted in both scientific (biological) and artistic (the flâneur) sources, a conclusion which resists any facile distinction between scientific and artistic modes of inquiry.

According to Frisby (1981:80-81), part of the 'charm' of the flâneur's writings stems from his capacity to extract something of significance from the fragments of life he witnesses, to illuminate the details of social life. Fresh insights are presented about familiar social scenes. Frisby recognises that the model of the flâneur does not completely fit Simmel's investigative stance, for Simmel's writings do not suggest a deep acquaintance with a wide range of aspects of Berlin city life, but it does capture certain aspects of Simmel's

intentions. Goffman likewise attempts to find significance in the fragments of interactional conduct, but his writings convey a much stronger sense of the streetwise flâneur and therein lies one source of their 'charm'. The model of the sociological observer as flâneur is, if anything, more appropriate to Goffman than Simmel.

### 5.3 Textual Formats

One basis of the appeal of Simmel and Goffman's texts resides in the chosen formats of their texts. By textual format I refer to the broad style in which their writings are arranged and the manner in which arguments and observations are presented. Three aspects of textual format will be discussed: the essay mode, preferred discursive structures and illustrative arrays.

#### 5.3.1 The Essay Mode

The modern essay as a literary genre dates back to 1580, the year of the first publication of Michel de Montaigne's Essais. In the essay a topic or topics is discussed in a formal or (more usually) an informal manner in a composition which may be book length but which is frequently much shorter. It is a flexible and adaptable literary form which allows wide scope for the expression of its author's individuality. As such, the essay mode is particularly well-attuned to the avowedly exploratory enterprises of Simmel and Goffman. It is a relatively 'free' literary mode which is uncontaminated by the associations with conventional logics of inquiry demanded by experimental or survey

research. As Catano (1986:71) suggests, 'it is a silent cry against the severity of the scientific text'. The essay mode facilitates the pursuit of ideas unfettered by the constraints imposed by well-established methodologies. It is thus a textual format which is entirely suited to the contexts of discovery in which the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman operate.

However the special ambitions of the discipline requires the sociological essay to depart from the literary type in certain important aspects. The sociological essay must apply or contribute to the conceptual vocabulary and theoretical discourse of the discipline. It must guard against the excessively whimsical statement and have some regard for objectivity if it is to be taken seriously. A logical style of exposition is required (Catano, 1986:63-64). At the same time it is an intensely personal and flexible *mode of expression which* allows fuller expression of an author's particular insights than more conventional academic textual modes.

Simmel's essayism has long been recognised. A contemporary, Frischeisen-Kohler, described him as 'the master of the philosophical essay' (cited in Frisby, 1981:69) whilst Catano (1986:60) refers to Simmel as 'the Montaigne of sociology'. Frisby suggests that Simmel was most at home with the essay mode which possessed for him 'an aesthetic autonomy that is... anti-positivist, anti-systematic and anti-academic' (1981:70). Discussing Simmel's 'conscious essayism' Frisby directs attention to some of its repercussions on his work: the overall appearance



of fragmentation it lends his writings; the shifts in the meanings of concepts that result from the changing perspectives called for by each new essay; and the way in which these changing perspectives serve to preserve Simmel's incognito, for they give the impression of a writer without any overall standpoint at all (ibid:70-72). Equally, it might just as well be argued that a virtue of the essay mode is that in enabling different perspectives to be brought to bear on a phenomenon, a more rounded view of its complexity can be obtained than is provided by unidirectional analyses stemming from a single point of view (in this regard, consider Simmel's various treatments of the individual, chapter 6 below).

This is certainly true of Goffman's adoption of the essay mode. He is clearly away of the essay's virtues for his own analytical purposes. Of the four essays collected as Asylums he writes:

'This method of presented material may be irksome to the reader, but it allows me to pursue the main theme of each paper analytically and comparatively past the point that would be allowable in chapters of an integrated book. I plead the state of the discipline. I think that at present, if sociological concepts are to be treated with affection, each must be traced back to where it best applies, followed from there wherever it seems to lead, and pressed to disclose the rest of its family. <sup>well</sup> Better, perhaps, different coats to clothe the children, than a single splendid tent in which they all shiver.' (1961a:xiii-xiv)

Only five of Goffman's eleven books (Presentation, Stigma, Behavior in Public Places, Frame Analysis and Gender Advertisements) could be described as monographs: the remainder

are collections of (mainly related) essays. Single splendid but draughty tents simply do not well serve his analytical purposes. But the essay format does not only suit his immediate analytical purpose of clothing the children well; it also promotes the process of ongoing conceptual articulation which Williams (1988) sees as the key to understanding Goffman's project as a whole, for it allows piecemeal modification and development to be readily carried out. However, what the essay mode does not facilitate is any kind of coherent statement or assessment of the current state of development of that process of conceptual articulation.

Further features of Goffman's essayism have been identified by Strong (1982). Concepts, theories and data can be selected from anywhere, provided they are germane to the problem at hand. There is no pretence of comprehensively surveying the materials relevant to the current analytical problem, but equally there are no constraints to remain within particular disciplinary boundaries when selecting materials. Even the everyday experience of the reader can be drawn upon. Since, as Goffman notes, the essay mode encourages arguments to be followed wherever they lead, digression is permissible and even obligatory. In Goffman's writings the footnoted discussions are often no less instructive than those located in the text. The sociological essay in Goffman's hands is a method of presenting sociology which is readily accessible to outsiders (Goffman is probably the most widely read sociologist by non-sociological audiences). Finally, Strong emphasises how Goffman's essayism

facilitates the process of invention and discovery. Science, Strong suggests, is 'more concerned with the mortality of ideas than their fertility' (1982:455). The relatively free essay mode positively encourages inventiveness. Testing and testing out those ideas is a task that can be left to others.

From the foregoing it is apparent that the essay mode is congruent with the notion of the sociologist as flâneur. Moreover, it is an especially personal mode of sociological exposition which enables the particular 'attitude of the observer' of Simmel and Goffman to find adequate expression. Because it draws on vernacular useage and everyday experience, it breaks down some of the barriers between scientific specialisms and wider publics. It is also, as Goffman is especially aware, a highly useful mode for pursuing particular analytical problems.

No doubt Simmel and Goffman's choice of the essay mode was informed by a number of personal and biographical conditions as well as by reason of intellectual utility. However it is worth ending this section with some sociological considerations of this stylistic choice. Simmel was, as Coser puts it, 'the stranger in the academy', consigned unjustly to a marginal status on account of his intellectual unconventionality and the anti-semitism and academic jealousies that were rife in the German university system around the turn of the century. Goffman's career cannot be characterised in anything like equivalent terms, and although it is true that many mainstream sociologists were quick to relegate his work to the less than

fully sociological category of 'social psychology', he certainly did not suffer professionally in the way Simmel undoubtedly did. Coser argues that Simmel cultivated audiences alternative to his academic peers through his lectures (which became 'events' for the cultural elite of Berlin) and by publishing frequently in non-scholarly journals (see Coser 1958:639, table 1). A talent for the essay was clearly helpful here.

As Kuhn and Feyerabend have amply demonstrated, innovatory developments in science frequently meet with resistance. Established scientific communities are often puzzled by such developments and may resist them because of the threat they represent. Simmel's and Goffman's works certainly fall into the category of innovative developments. In the struggle to gain acceptance for their ideas, a facility for the essay is of some considerable strategic use, for it permits them to communicate with wider publics and in a sense make an appeal over the heads of established academic authorities. For innovatory sociologies like those of Simmel and Goffman, the essay mode may also have strategic significance: it has a levelling function which stands in contrast to the specialised knowledge and esoteric methodologies of established logics of science.

### 5.3.2 Preferred Discursive Structures

Whilst the characteristic methods used by Simmel and Goffman to develop their analyses are not, strictly speaking, matters of textual format, they nonetheless possess some sufficiently general features to warrant examination under this

heading. I shall refer to these characteristic and fairly general features of their analyses as preferred discursive structures and discuss in turn Simmel's dualism and Goffman's use of conceptual frameworks.

The point of departure for very many of Simmel's analyses is the assertion of a paradox or antinomy. The opening sentence of 'The stranger' is a classic case in point:

'If wandering is the liberation from every given point in space, and thus the conceptual opposite to fixation at such a point, the sociological form of the "stranger" presents the unity, as it were, of these two characteristics.' (1950:402)

The assertion of a dualism serves as a starting point; it also serves as the vehicle through which an analysis is accomplished. This can be seen quite clearly in Simmel's paper on 'Fashion' (1957; orig.1904). *Fashion is defined as a social form existing in the tension constructed by a master dualism: the desire for imitation, to be alike others, and the desire for individuation, to be different from others. Fashion is a unity forged out of adaptation and differentiation, union and segregation. On the one hand, fashion has an imitative basis; it is 'sired by thought out of thoughtlessness' (translation presented in König, 1973:117). On the other hand it is a means whereby the individual can differentiate himself from the generality of persons. Within the context of this master dualism, Simmel then proceeds to develop his analysis through a series of subsidiary dualisms. Fashion occupies 'the dividing line between the past*

and the future' and couples 'the charm of novelty' to that of 'transitoriness' (1957:547). From fashion 'the individual derives the satisfaction of knowing that as adopted by him it still represents something special and striking, while at the same time he feels inwardly supported by a set of persons who are striving for the same thing' (ibid:548). Fashion is of significance for how others see the individual, 'for it emphasizes his personality not only through omission but also through observance' (ibid:549). Women (and here Simmel is presumably speaking of the situation of women in Wilhelmine Germany) find fashion particularly attractive because, naturally tending towards customary ways of life on the one hand and denied the individualisation provided by success in a calling or profession, they can achieve the modest 'relative individualization and personal conspicuousness that remains' (ibid:550). Because fashion is conceived as a unity residing polar and opposing formal impulses, it can absorb any content: not only clothing, but also scientific interests, artistic movements, forms of conduct, religious faiths and political creeds may fall under its sway (ibid:544, 557-558).

Simmel's preference for dualistic discursive structures is a feature of his analytical style which gives rise to its characterisation as 'dialectical' in the manner of Hegel. Through these dualisms Simmel seeks to capture the paradoxes and ambiguities of a social life that can never be grasped in its totality; it is a method that displays the ultimate impossibility of such total capture, attempting to preserve the ineffability of

life's energies and interests whilst at the same time making some analytical inroads into it. (Simmel once remarked: 'I am not at all inclined to confine the profusion of life within the limits of a symmetrical system', 1984:131.) Simmel's dualism is part of the charm of his writing but it also frequently results in prose that is sometimes tortuous, forbidding and not always kind to the reader. It is also a sufficiently general feature of Simmel's texts as to allow Goffman on one occasion to parody the master (see 1971:35n.12).

The attempt to specify and articulate concepts and interrelate them in conceptual frameworks can be regarded as the equivalent preferred discursive structure in Goffman to Simmel's dualism. Aspects of Goffman's concern to articulate 'coherent analytic perspectives' have already been discussed in sections 2.5, 4.5 and 4.7 above and these need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that Goffman regards the classificatory endeavour to be quite fundamental if the sociological description and analysis of the units and processes of the interaction order is to proceed beyond commonsense intuitions.

Goffman's pre-eminent concern to specify the meanings and applications of his concepts and to logically order them into frameworks gives his writings an architectural impressiveness that Simmel's dualistic discursive structures manifestly lack. In a famous comment at the end of Presentation Goffman observes, 'scaffolds, after all, are to build other things with and should be erected with an eye to taking them down' (1959:254). His

facility at building conceptual scaffolds is such that it is if Simmel's statement of exploratory intent - 'it is a characteristic of the human mind to be capable of erecting solid structures while their foundations are still insecure' (in Wolff, 1950:xxxii) - had been taken almost literally. Like any adept scaffolder, Goffman sets up his conceptual frameworks from scratch. In this way Goffman takes the reader from his point of departure, usually a sketch of the basic assumptions which he wishes to adopt, through a more complex stage where forms of interaction are classified, sources of disruption are identified, and consequences articulated, to his conclusion. For readers, this is an appealing method of proceeding. Little specialised fore-knowledge is demanded. If the reader is taxed at all, it is usually because of the numbers and fineness of some of the conceptual distinctions that are made (eg those pertaining to role in 'Role distance', 1961b), or because of the sheer volume of illustrative material (eg throughout Stigma, 1963b or in 'The manufacture of negative experience', ch.11 of Goffman, 1974). Moreover, although Goffman's analyses develop in a particular direction, they do not do so in a narrative progression. He analyses episodes of interaction in an episodic manner. It is for this reason that Giddens can liken reading Goffman to reading Wittgenstein; the reader can begin almost anywhere in their works, and yet come to grasp the author's reasoning after only a page or two (Giddens, 1988:251; the Wittgenstein allusion appeared only in the oral version of the paper delivered at the



University of York, July 1986). Goffman's flat, expository style is particularly attractive to non-sociological readers.

But, to continue with the analogy, a scaffolding is not a building and scaffolders are not skilled at the bricklaying, joinery and plumbing required for its successful completion. Conceptual scaffolds provide resources for theories and explanations of the interaction order, but are not themselves theories and explanations. That is the logic of Cioffi's eloquent criticism of Goffman. As was noted in 4.6 above, Cioffi's case rests on some overdrawn distinctions between art and science. Nonetheless, it is useful to here review some of his observations about the rhetorical functions of Goffman's conceptual frameworks. Cioffi suggests that the value and interest of Goffman's accounts lie in the 'exorcistic power' of his 'synoptic mode of presentation'. Fear is drained from the phenomena that feature in Goffman's writings; the phenomena appear tamed and subdued by Goffman's concepts and the theoretical assumptions underlying them. What Goffman 'surveys' order are not facts but our thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon in question. They provide not analytical coherence but rather introduce 'some stability and coherence to our attitudes' (1971:129-130). No doubt these are real latent functions of Goffman's writings for (some) readers. Cioffi's sole mistake is to regard these functions as the only genuine ones accomplished by Goffman's analyses. If Simmel's dualism seeks to preserve the ineffability of life's energies, then Goffman's conceptual frameworks run in an opposing direction,

finding social orderliness and a social determinism in the details of interaction and experience where none was commonly thought to exist, and there are both analytical and persuasive functions associated with this endeavour.

### 5.3.3 Illustrative Arrays

It was argued in chapter 4 that whilst illustrations are not evidence, they nonetheless give empirical reference to a formal concept and comprise an elementary type of testing out of the concept. Thus Simmel and Goffman's illustrations share an identical theoretical function. What can be said about the comparisons and contrasts between the kinds of illustrations each sociologist employs?

Goffman's illustrations derive from a diversity of sources, including ethnographies (including his own), other social science research studies, novels, plays, newspaper clippings, memoirs and autobiographies, comic books as well as his own informal observations of social life. Simmel also draws on informal observation but presents a much larger proportion of illustrations drawn from European history. The sources of Simmel's illustrations are scarcely ever referenced; Goffman's invariably are. If, as Simmel argued in the long quotation (1950:88-89n1) cited in section 4.6.2, the point of the illustrations is simply to indicate that the analyst's interpretation is a possible one, then these differences appear to amount to no more than an individual preference. However, the difference might also be explained by the wider scope of 'forms

of sociation' compared to 'the interaction order' (see 3.7 above). In view of the broader scope of Simmel's analyses and his particular concern with the nature and development of individuality, historical examples are often best-suited to make the desired point. Correspondingly, Goffman's interest in interactional minutiae drives him in the direction of seeking examples drawn from everyday life wherever (although not whenever) it is manifested, and the frequently picayune and trivial illustrations serve this purpose well. In addition, the use of illustrations derived from informal observation and 'commonsense' often functions to identify the reader with the analysis presented - the frequently noted 'shock of recognition' as the reader realises 'I have been there' - and thus to 'clinch' the author's argument. This is an important attraction of microsociology which should not be underestimated (see 5.5.1 below for further considerations). As Collins (1988c:244) puts it, the attraction arises from the fact that 'this is where we live. Our lives are micro. Whatever human experience is, high points, low points and every other existential dimension, it happens to us in micro-situations'. It is sometimes suggested that one appeal of reading sociology is that we are reading about ourselves. In that case reading Goffman is especially compelling because the phenomena he describes are utterly ubiquitous features of everyone's everyday lives.

Simmel's illustrations are more closely tailored to his immediate analytical needs than Goffman's precisely because he is unconcerned about sources and quotations. Simmel's illustrations

are invariably rendered in Simmel's own prose; Goffman, especially in his books, prefers to quote and to frequently quote at length. This gives the pages of his books a distinctive cast or composition, but when the quotations are too profuse the result is not 'reader-friendly' and the practice does lead to complaints of 'padding'. The tendency to over-cite quotations sometimes makes Goffman appear a less skilful bricoleur of illustrative material than Simmel. As already noted, Stigma is notorious in this regard. One example of the tendency appears in the illustration of the point that the discreditable face 'management problems' over matters that are thoroughly routine for normals: a 9-line long quotation from a near blind man is followed by a 16-line quotation from a young boy with a urinary stricture, a 6-line quotation from a stutterer, an 8-line quotation from the wife of a mental patient, 3 lines from a homosexual, 5 lines from a colostomy patient and - interspersed with a short prose passage from Goffman on the 'Cinderella syndrome' - another 10-line quotation about the problems of colostomy patients (1963b:88-90).

However, it would be a mistake to suggest that Goffman is more concerned with retailing the calamitous circumstances of the stigmatised than illustrating an analytical point, for the practice serves clear analytical and rhetorical functions. Edmondson (1984:52-60) refers to the provision of quotations from real cases in sociological texts as 'actual types'. These examples do not need to be statistically typical but in order to work successful they do have to represent actual instances of the

analyst's concept or generalisation. The process whereby the actual type comes to be seen as representing a concept or generalisation relies upon the reader taking active steps to combine his existing knowledge and attitudes towards, say, the situation of the stutterer or the homosexual, with the analyst's argument. In this process the reader's attitudes may undergo change. The use of actual type illustrations is a collaborative process between author and reader which both vivifies the analyst's concept or generalisation and modifies the reader's attitude towards the phenomenon. The use of actual type illustrations by Goffman has a much stronger persuasive function than Simmel's use of 'tamed' illustrations because it allows the reader to directly experience the sentiments embedded in the quotation.

It was argued in section 4.6.2 that illustrations are not evidence and that the materials drawn upon for illustration possess a tentative status that the reader could overrule; a situation described by Cioffi as 'I lose if you say I have lost'. Thus, the presentation of a successful illustration involves elements of readers' work as well as authors' analytical adeptness. A formal concept or generalisation re-orders the reader's sense of relevance in the description that functions as the concept or generalisation's illustration of it. It is thus somewhat misleading to speak of Simmel and Goffman's 'data' as that has evidential rather than illustrative connotations. The snug fit that frequently obtains between the formal concept and the illustration has been tellingly described by Watson who

writes that Goffman's observations 'seem to be designed to "deliver" just the analytic point Goffman wishes to make: no more and no less' (1983:105; cf. Scheqloff's, 1988:101, remarks on Goffman's 'analytical pointillism' and 'sociology by epitome'). How is this snug fit accomplished?

In a later paper Watson (1987) argues that Goffman's illustrations are sociological redescriptions which can be regarded as operating under the auspices of Garfinkel's documentary method of interpretation. For Garfinkel (1967:ch.3) making sense involves a back-and-forth mutual elaboration of observed particulars and a presumed underlying pattern. Goffman's concepts and generalisations project an underlying pattern in which terms the particulars of the illustrations are read; the illustration in turn elaborates what the concept or generalisation comes to mean for the reader. Collaborative interpretive work between reader and analyst is thus required for some materials to successfully function as an illustration. At the illustration-by-illustration level this is an omnipresent feature of Simmel's and Goffman's sociologies; it is the method through which an 'instructed reading' (Watson 1987:8) of their illustrations is achieved. This is not a defect of Simmel and Goffman's method but one of the working practices through which their method is realised. Furthermore, it is an aspect of their method that is quite consonant with their ideas about 'the attitude of the observer' and the need for 'coherent analytic perspectives' in which it is not 'facts' or 'data' which have

primacy but necessarily selective points of view and particular analytic stances.

#### 5.4 Metaphor as an Analytical and Persuasive Device

'Metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality.' (Ricoeur 1977:7)

Ricoeur's splendid statement links the previous section's discussion of the redescriptive work done by formal sociology on its illustrative material with the concern of the present section, which examines how Simmel and Goffman employ metaphor to promote analysis and persuasion in their writings. Attention is given to the analytical and persuasive functions of metaphor; to be specifically disregarded in this section are the numerous critical commentaries about the model of social being or image of human nature implied by Goffman's master metaphor, dramaturgy. These will be addressed in the following chapter.

The application of a metaphor involves seeing an object from the point of view of something else that is not literally applicable to it. To view social life as system or a field of forces or a game is to apply a metaphor; the practice is very widespread in sociology. Indeed it can be argued that all theoretical knowledge is metaphorical in some sense because it necessarily involves seeing its object from the viewpoint of something else (Nisbet 1976:32-32; <sup>Brown</sup> 1977:77 and ch.4 of this book for a general treatment of metaphor in sociology). Metaphor always involves a transfer from one system of meaning to another;

if a metaphor is taken literally it is absurd; a metaphor is a consciously 'as if' analytical device designed to create a new amalgam of understanding about a phenomenon (Brown, 1977, passim). Yet despite the indispensability of metaphor in some shape or other for all theorising, social scientists have usually been exceedingly cautious about accepting metaphorical accounts of social life and this attitude is evident in the reception of both Simmel and Goffman's sociologies.

#### 5.4.1 Metaphor in Simmel

Simmel employs a range of metaphors and analogies in his writings. His frequent recourse to a geometrical analogy to justify the special province of formal sociology has been noted in chapters 1 and 4, although it also figures in certain of his substantive discussions, such as the transformation of work activity from an expression of personality to an objective function which Simmel envisages as characteristic of 'extreme state socialism' (1978:296-297). More generally, spatial imagery is present in a number of his analyses of forms of sociation. Chapter 9 of Sociology examines the sociological significance of space and the spatial ordering of society. 'The stranger' is defined as a particular social relation conceived as lying between nearness and remoteness to the social group. One role of money is identified as the 'conquest of distance' (1978:476). Secrecy increases the distance between people whilst conflict closes it. The tragedy of culture is the increasing distance between subjective and objective culture. As Levine has



suggested, distance is a major sociological dimension for Simmel (1959:23; see also Levine 1971:xxiv-xxxv).

A predilection for physicalist and mechanistic imagery is also evident in Simmel's sociological writings, a residue, apparently, of the early impact of Herbert Spencer on his thinking (on Spencer and Simmel see Frisby 1984:71-72). This propensity towards physicalist and mechanistic imagery is evident in On Social Differentiation (eg the discussion of the principle of energy-saving) but is also apparent in later work. Individuals are frequently described as the 'elements' or 'atoms of society'; sociation is described as 'microscopic-molecular processes'; super-individual organisations are 'crystallized' out of interaction (ibid). In 'The sociology of sociability' Simmel writes 'the energy effects of atoms upon each other bring matter into the innumerable forms which we see as "thing"' (1949:254). The 'impulses' of individuals 'push' them into interaction with others (ibid). Sociability spares the individual 'the frictional relations of real life' (1949:255). It must be said that Simmel's physicalist and mechanistic imagery sits uneasily with his aestheticism and is usually characteristic of positivistically-inclined sociologies which conceive society as a system or structure of competing and conflicting forces. Why does Simmel elect to use this imagery? A Spencerian residue is a beginning but on its own is hardly an adequate answer. Two further reasons may be advanced. One is that physicalist and mechanistic imagery facilitates the expression of one of Simmel's fundamental assumptions about social life, that conflict is

endemic: between individuals, between social groups, and ultimately between form and life. A second reason for this stylistic preference lies in Simmel's ideas about the 'dignity' of forms (cf. section 4.3 above). Forms have a dual character, superior to individuals yet also subject to their purposes, interests and so forth. Physicalist and mechanistic imagery emphasises the superiority aspect; at the same time, Simmel seeks to guard against postulating the forms in a logic of exteriority in a manner reminiscent of Durkheim's view of social facts.

Frisby (1981:96-97) argues that Simmel's figurative language and his 'excessive' use of analogy are further evidence of his aestheticism, and that whilst analogies may be suggestive heuristic devices they 'do not lead to the examination of real connections'. Frisby is echoing the earlier complaints of Durkheim (1960:358) and Weber (1972:160). Weber suggested that there is something 'external' to the analogous procedure when the real job for the social scientist is to establish the 'causal components' of a phenomenon's 'intrinsic nature'. These criticisms appear to demand a reproductive realism for scientific knowledge which Simmel considers unattainable. The 'correctness and completeness' of our knowledge derives not from the objects themselves. Rather, 'our epistemological ideal should always be [the object's] contents in the form of ideas, since even the most extreme realism wishes to gain not the objects themselves but rather knowledge of them' (1978:450, emphasis in original). Elsewhere Simmel held as one aim of social analysis the capacity

'... to experience in the individual phenomenon, with all of its details, the fullness of its reality. To this end... a certain retreat from the phenomenon is necessary, a transforming of it which renounces the mere reflection of what is given in nature, in order to regain, from a higher point of view, more fully and more deeply its reality.' (Simmel, 1902, quoted in Frisby 1985:45)

Metaphor and analogy for Simmel clearly have an important, even necessary, role to play in attaining that 'higher point of view'. But, in view of his perspectivism and his thinking about 'the attitude of the observer', it is problematic whether Simmel considered it possible or necessary to go beyond an analogically-obtained 'higher point of view' to grasp the reality or 'intrinsic nature' of things.

#### 5.4.2 Metaphor in Goffman

There are a range of metaphorical resources which Goffman draws upon in his writings, including the confidence game, the dramatic performance, the Chinese conception of face, the religious ritual, ethology and the theory of games. Of these, the dramatic performance and the religious ritual are perhaps the most important and pervasive in his work; the present discussion will consider only the former. The dramaturgical perspective developed in Presentation and refined in later works (especially Frame Analysis) is Goffman's best-known use of a metaphorical resource. The theatrum mundi metaphor has a long history (see Burns, 1972) and lies at the base of modern role theory. The distinctive turn taken by Goffman is to apply it to the particulars of interaction. The activity of co-present

persons is regarded as a 'performance' and the problems of successfully enacting these performances are seen in dramaturgical terms. Goffman's claim is that 'the issues dealt with by stage-craft and stage management are sometimes trivial but they are quite general' (1959:15) and they provide the terms for building a conceptual framework for interaction analysis.

The central motif of Goffman's approach is the idea that self has to be 'presented' to others and the dramaturgical model illuminates the management of impressions of self, indicating similarities with the problems involved in staging a play. Goffman emphasises the management aspect of self-presentation. The enactment of appropriate self-presentations requires the employment of particular 'arts' or 'techniques', and various 'contingencies' must be anticipated if particular self-presentations are to be sustained. The process of presentation of self is thus conceived of as a task (Rose, 1966:12) comprising a range of skills and competences, the components of which are described in the body of the book (the management of front, the dramatisation of performance, teamwork, tact regarding tact, and so on). It is worth emphasising that self-presentation is seen as a task amenable to dramaturgical analysis, because casual perusal of the book's chapter headings do not adequately reflect the deep ingression of a dramaturgical analytical vocabulary. Throughout Goffman writes of 'fostering an impression', 'staging a character', 'presenting an appearance', 'projecting an image', 'engaging in a routine' and 'putting on a show'. These dramaturgical terms are designed to

highlight the tasks of self-presentation to reveal their assembled and socially organised character.

Ordinarily, persons do not regard the enactment of self-presentations as a task (cf. Messinger et al, 1962). The role of dramaturgy (and the other metaphorical devices) is precisely to illuminate 'the interactional tasks that all of us share' (1959:255). Goffman's justification for the use of metaphorical devices is apparently the same as his justification for studying interaction in extreme or extraordinary situations: to exert some analytical purchase on the 'obvious' and the taken-for-granted.

There is a well-worn distinction in the philosophy of the social sciences between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that': between the tacit or mutual or commonsense knowledge which persons routinely employ in everyday conduct as a largely unarticulated and unacknowledged resource, and the empirical knowledge sought by an observer that is explicitly formulated in science and other bodies of thought. One aim of social science is to express the former in the terms of the latter. The aim is not an easy one for an enterprise like Goffman's which has as a central plank the analysis of ordinary occurrences:

'A radical ethnography must take ordinary persons doing ordinary things as the central issue.' (1971:260n.19)

'The first object of social analysis ought, I think, to be ordinary, actual behavior - its structure and organization.' (1974:564)

But it is not always easy to appreciate the structure and organisation of ordinary behaviour because the observer will tend to take for granted the assumptions informing that behaviour. This is Goffman's justification for appealing to extraordinary situations, such as those involved in espionage (1969:3), and for studying criminals 'and other social desperadoes such as children, comics, saboteurs, and the certified insane' (1971:260n.19), for they contrastively show that is otherwise taken for granted. Metaphor is similarly used by Goffman to gain some purchase on what is readily assumed and thus overlooked in ordinary conduct. By means of these devices Goffman is able to 'see the familiar with the eyes of a stranger, while at the same time retaining his familiarity with what is being viewed' (MacIntyre, 1969:447).

Metaphor works to effect a transfer from one (literal) level or frame of reference to a different (figurative) level or frame. As was noted in section 5.3.3 above, this redescriptive work is artfully concealed by Goffman. Consider the following example of an aspect of dramaturgical circumspection:

'The circumspect performer will also attempt to select the kind of audience that will give a minimum of trouble in terms of the show the performer wants to put on and the show he does not want to have to put on. Thus it is reported that teachers often favour neither lower-class pupils nor upper-class ones, because both groups make it difficult to maintain in the classroom the kind of definition of the situation which affirms the professional teacher role. Teachers will transfer to middle-class schools for these dramaturgical reasons.' (1959:218-219)

Our ordinary understanding of threats that lower-class and upper-class pupils may make to the teacher's enactment of the professional role is transformed in this passage. Goffman uses the dramaturgical metaphor to effect a re-viewing of this understanding as an example of audience selection undertaken by the dramaturgically circumspect teacher. The persuasive work done by Goffman is largely concealed from view by the neat dovetailing of the illustration and the generalisation about audience selection and dramaturgical circumspection. *Anderson and Sharrock* (1982:85) describe this practice as 'imposing a unity of purpose' on apparently disparate phenomena, and suggest that it is endemic to Goffman's dramaturgy.

At the end of Presentation Goffman admits that 'this attempt to press a mere analogy so far was in part a rhetoric and a maneuver' (1959:254). Dramaturgy is offered as a conceptual framework, not a theory, and it lacks the explicit formalisation of metaphor contained in, for example, exchange theory (Ekeh, 1974). Goffman's application of the metaphor is thus somewhat tentative; dramaturgy appears to have the status of 'just another' one of his conceptual frameworks. It looks as if it is simply another framework under whose auspices aspects of the structure and functioning of encounters can be described. (Incidentally, it is this concern with interactional particulars which distinguishes dramaturgy from Kenneth Burke's dramatism; dramatism is concerned with the forms of thought underlying social action and especially the terms used by literary writers and philosophers. See Burke, 1945; Rueckert, 1963;

Perinbanayagam, 1982.) In Presentation, for the most part, Goffman's content to treat the dramaturgical model as a simile, or analogy, observing that 'all the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify' (1959:72). Among the limits and inadequacies of the dramaturgical model which Goffman mentions are: (1) staged reality is rehearsed and make-believe whilst life is unrehearsed and real; (2) there are three parties on the stage (two teams and the audience) but usually only two in interaction (1959:xi); (3) dramaturgy may have restricted utility in the study of non-Western societies (ibid:244; but see Gregor, 1977 for one such application); (4) certain aspects of management-labour relations and those of international diplomacy may not be well-handled by dramaturgy (1959:245); (5) the stage-player's reputation is not at stake in the same way that the interactant's is: a performance disruption only threatens the former's professional reputation but it may have a wider or narrower impact on the reputation of the interactant (ibid:254). However, there hints even in Presentation that dramaturgy may represent more than 'a mere analogy'; that it may function as a homology.

In the closing paragraphs of 'Performances' in Presentation Goffman argues that our conduct is not scripted but rather arises from a 'command of an idiom' usually exercised with 'little calculation of forethought'. He writes: 'we all act better than we know how' (ibid:74). The ease and smoothness with which many performances are carried off does not gainsay the performative elements in them. In these closing paragraphs Goffman does not explicitly suggest that interaction really is a



theatrical performance, but the drift of his argument appears to close down the gap between the figurative and literal levels:

'A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well-articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be enacted and protrayed, something that must be realized.' (1959:75)

Dramaturgy is a heuristic which illuminates the assembled, task-like character of this conduct, but the tenor and drift of Goffman's argument here hints at the possibility of something more than a mere analogy.

Some of these suspicions surface in Frame Analysis. In contradiction to his statement in Presentation (1959:72) Goffman proposes 'all the world is like a stage, we do strut and fret our hour on it, and that is all the time we have' (1974:124), but presumably the statement is not meant to be taken too seriously, for in the ensuing discussion eight 'transcription practices' differentiating face-to-face interaction from the staged kind are presented (ibid:138-144; see 2.7.2 above) and later the differences between 'natural' and 'staged figures' (ibid:524-529) are described. In chapter 13 of Frame Analysis Goffman argues that there is a close similarity between the frame structure of the theatre and the frame structure of storytelling talk arising from the requirement, when telling a story, to maintain some suspense about the sequence-to-be. In the 'Introduction' to Goffman's last book, Forms of Talk Goffman states

'... I make no large literary claim that social life is but a stage, only a small technical one: that deeply incorporated into the nature of talk are the fundamental requirements of theatricality.' (1981a:4)

However there is no definitive statement about the incorporation of theatricality requirements in talk, merely occasional and ad hoc appeals to dramaturgical considerations. Thus some types of 'self-talk' function as impression management strategies to convey to others that we have another self that is not as incompetent or absent-minded as our clumsy behaviour might indicate. In these last works Goffman apparently wants to suggest that in respect to some aspects of talk dramaturgy is more than a mere analogy, but he fails to present any clear statements about the scope of applicability of the metaphor.

In the course of the development of Goffman's sociology dramaturgy drifts from its status as an explicit analogy towards more homologous uses. The drift is ambiguous and somewhat contradictory; dramaturgy is an analogy in chapter 5 of Frame Analysis but a homology in chapter 13 and in Forms of Talk. A similar tendency is evident in the use of the ritual model which was introduced in his early writings as an analogy, a heuristic to investigate the ritual dimension of interaction, but which later becomes a concern with ritual acts (cf. Piotrowski, 1986). A metaphorical perspective is transformed into an interest in action-type concepts, 'a special class of quite conventionalized utterances, lexicalizations whose controlling purpose is to give

praise, blame, thanks, support, affection... and so forth' (1981a:20).

This analytic sleight-of-hand has important consequences. When dramaturgy shifts from an analogy to a homology, what was once a metaphor<sup>intended</sup> as a heuristic to illuminate features of the social world now comes to stand as a literal representation of the real nature of the phenomena in question (storytelling, response cries). As a heuristic device dramaturgy illuminates the possibility of describing interaction in theatrical terms. The reader is invited to consider the possibility of looking at the assembly of interaction in these terms. But the shift to homology marks a move away from possibilities to actualities: storytelling and response cries are literally dramaturgical in their real nature. This is a much more disputatious move; it makes a case for a dramaturgical ontology which invites the counterclaim that non-metaphoric concepts may be better suited for the analysis of conversational actualities (Helm, 1982). Goffman's use of metaphor as an analytical and persuasive device is thus thoroughly ambiguous and contentious.

### 5.5 Sociological Tropes

This section examines some further stylistic features of the sociological texts of Simmel and Goffman. It focuses on how explanation and persuasion are effected at the paragraph-by-paragraph and line-by-line levels of the texts under two headings: authorial presence and reader collaboration, and

unexpected juxtapositions. Whilst previous section of this chapter tended to concentrate upon the similarities between the two authors, this section sharply reveals the disparities between their styles of writings, analysis and persuasion. If Simmel can be described as a sociological impressionist (Frisby, 1981), then Goffman is surely the modern discipline's leading sociological farceur. Lukacs (1918) originated this view of Simmel, calling him 'the true philosopher of impressionism' (quoted in Frisby, 1981:92) and another contemporary, Siegfried Kracauer (1920), evoked the same image, suggesting that in Simmel's writings 'everything shimmers, everything flows, everything is ambiguous, everything converges in a shifting form' (quoted in *ibid*:98). Goffman in contrast is less interested in producing a general effect in the manner of impressionistic art as he is in pressing home particular points by means of witticism and irony which are broadly intended to challenge the reader's prejudices and taken for granted assumptions. Some aspects of the employment of these tropes in their sociological writings are considered below.

#### 5.5.1 Authorial Presence and Reader Collaboration

The point of departure for the present section is the argument outlined in section 5.2 which maintained that knowledge is thoroughly perspectival because it is relative to the attitude of the observer and contains evaluative elements which stem from that attitude. The attitude of the observer is communicated to the reader by the written text. However reading is not a one-way transmission of ideas but involves a process of interpretation

which Gadamer (1975:235-245) refers to as the 'hermeneutic circle' - an interactive process in which the reader's 'fore-understandings' must be necessarily presupposed for any understanding of the text to be possible. These 'fore-understandings' or 'prejudices' (in the special, non-pejorative sense of the term advocated by Gadamer) are conditions of further understanding and it is the prejudices of the reader that the text first draws upon and then works upon. In this section I want to examine some features of the texts of Simmel and Goffman in order to establish the nature of authorial presence in each and to consider how these features co-opt the reader into the author's analysis and work on the reader's prejudices.

Both Simmel and Goffman appear to subscribe to the idea of an interaction between author and reader. Simmel, true to his 'regulative world principle' that everything interacts with everything else (cf. section 1.3 above), prefaced his book on Kant with the observation that it was 'not only a book by Simmel and Kant, but also by Kant about Simmel' (quoted in Levine, 1985:136). Goffman also recognises that reading entails a reciprocal relationship between author and reader in his comments on his own 'Introduction' to Frame Analysis (1974:16-20; see also O'Neill, 1981). An author cannot legislate through an introduction how a reader will read his text; whatever the author's intentions are, these will be reworked and recomposed by the reader. Both Simmel and Goffman hold that what the reader brings to a reading of the text is no less important than the

interactions the author seeks to express through the text. This is not to suggest that reading texts is a radically idiosyncratic venture in which every reader makes a unique reading and thus that there are infinite interpretations of texts. Rather, there will be 'preferred readings' (cf. Morley, 1980; 1981) conditioned by the structure and content of the text on the one hand and the knowledge and social position of the reader on the other. The present discussion focusses on the former considerations.

Simmel's fragmentary style of writing attracted a good deal of criticism from his contemporaries (Axelrod, 1977, 1979; chapter 4 above) but it can be more positively valued if seen as a characteristic of his method and indeed as a central feature of life as he viewed it. The term 'fragmentary' repeatedly recurs in Simmel's philosophy and sociology. Fragments of individuals are all we ever have access to; more generally 'the world is given to us as a sum of fragments' (1959c:299). Art, philosophy and sociology, each in their own way, bring order to these fragments by attempting to extract the universal from them. Ultimately, that ordering is accomplished by an individual observer with his own 'attitude'; method thus becomes the responsibility of the individual. As Simmel observes at the beginning of Sociology, 'perfection can here be obtained by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see' (quoted in Wolff, 1950:xxxiii). Simmel's idiosyncratic style thus stands opposed to bureaucratisation and professionalisation of intellectual work which Weber (1948) saw as part of the

rationalisation of modern science and scholarship (Oakes, 1984:56-58). Small wonder that Simmel finds the essay mode so congenial for his purposes.

The fragmentary nature of our experience of the world is expressed in those features of Simmel's writing that comprise his 'sociological impressionism' (Frisby 1981:91ff). An authorial stance is implied by Simmel's impressionism. A rejection of rigid forms and systems which might close-off the richness of life is one feature of Simmel's impressionism. The tentative, provisional and exploratory status of his sociology is another; society is a 'labryinth' into which his sociology can make only partial and selective inroads. Further features of Simmel's impressionism include his perspectivism, his use of allusion and analogy, and the indeterminacy and imprecision of his statements. These latter features are evident in two expressions which abound in his writings: 'perhaps' and 'so to speak'.

Several of these features are evident in the following passage, taken from Simmel's discussion of knowledge of persons (cf. section 3.3 above).

'Every relationship between persons give rise to a picture of each in the other; and this picture, obviously, interacts with the actual relation. The relation constitutes the condition under which the conception, that each has of the other, takes this or that shape and has its truth legitimated. On the other hand, the real interaction between the individuals is based upon the pictures which they acquire of one another. Here we have one of the deep-lying circuits of intellectual life, where an element presupposes a second element which yet, in turn, presupposes the

first. While, in narrow fields, this is a fallacy that invalidates everything, in more general and fundamental fields it is the inevitable expression of the unity into which both elements fuse, a unity which, with our forms of thought, cannot be expressed otherwise than by saying that we build the first upon the second and, at the same time, the second upon the first. Our relationships thus develop upon the basis of reciprocal knowledge, and this knowledge upon the basis of actual relations. Both are inextricably interwoven. In their alternation within sociological interaction, they reveal interaction as one of the points where being and conceiving make their mysterious unity empirically felt.' (1950:309)

There is use of analogy ('pictures' of persons). The labyrinthine nature of knowledge of persons is emphasised. The last sentence underlines the richness of social life out of which Simmel's sociological observation seeks to extract one selective aspect. There is also an imprecision: what exactly is the nature of these 'pictures'? The reader has to supply some kind of sense from the resources of his commonsense or 'prejudices'. 'Knowledge' and 'relations' are used in a similarly indeterminate way. The reader is explicitly called upon by the use of 'our' in the penultimate sentence beginning 'Our relationships...'. The whole passage has an abstractness which places considerable demands upon the reader's own knowledge of interpersonal relations, particularly in the description of the 'deep-lying circuits of intellectual life'. Just as the viewing of an impressionist painting calls upon the viewer's naturalistic viewing competence, making sense of Simmel's sociological observations requires the collaboration of the reader to render them intelligible. In that process some re-ordering of the reader's commonsense knowledge or prejudices may occur. As



readers of Simmel's texts we may carry over the observation about the reciprocal influence of relations and knowledge, being and conceiving, into reflections about our own interpersonal dealings. That may be one consequence of the process of textual persuasion but it depends upon the prior work done by the reader in giving reference to Simmel's sociological ideas out of the resources of the reader's commonsense.

Simmel's writings are not all of a piece; some are undoubtedly less demanding upon readers than others. Much of his work is somewhat difficult for many modern readers; this is the downside of his fragmentary style. As Coser puts it, Simmel 'was never given to follow a straight path in his writings if a twisting road proved to be available' (1977:874). For the modern reader, that makes for a rather obtrusive authorial presence. But equally, for his contemporaries this same difficulty made him an enormously popular lecturer, for he was able to convey the impression at the podium of thinking creatively, of presenting his material in an apparently improvised manner that laid bare his reasoning. One student described Simmel's lectures in the following terms:

'The listener had the impression that he experienced the finding of truth in statu nascendi. There was no suggestion of indoctrination. Simmel's delivery struck us as the struggle of an individual, lonely soul with truth, as "creative evolution" in the proper sense of the term, as the skill of midwifery at its best.' (Salz, 1959:235)

Something of this impression is also conveyed through Simmel's texts.

Goffman's stance towards his topic matter could scarcely be described as a sociological impressionism. Through the development of concepts and the construction of conceptual frameworks he seeks a sharper delineation of the social organisation of interactional minutiae; finding pattern, developing concepts to reorder our view of social activity and assembling them into 'coherent analytic perspectives' is the order of the day and this demands a more precise recording effort than that offered by the impressionist's brush-strokes. Goffman's authorial stance is not readily amenable to artistic labelling. There may be affinities with the notion of the observer as flâneur (section 5.2 above) and his use of witticism to further his analytic objectives may make the sociological farceur description apposite, but overall Goffman's authorial stance resists any obvious labelling in the terms of major artistic movements.

For the most part, Goffman's authorial stance is 'modest' and 'unassuming'. A common observation is that he writes in an 'accessible' way. His analyses start from conceptual scratch, making few if any demands upon the reader's prior, specialised sociological knowledge. His writing is generally clear and peppered with vernacular expressions which gives it a further appeal to the non-specialised readership. It

has a seductive quality, drawing the reader in to view the world in the way Goffman analyses it.

Three practices may be identified which achieve this effect. The first is the inclusion of illustrative material which expressly invokes the reader's commonsense knowledge of social arrangements. Goffman sketches some features of these arrangements which he assumes will be thoroughly familiar to his readers. Here are three instances of the practice from 'Alienation from interaction':

Becoming spontaneously involved in an activity is 'a ticklish thing, as we all know from experience with dull chores or threatening ones'. (1967:115)

'Whatever the cause of self-consciousness, we are all familiar with the vacillation of action and the flusterings through which self-consciousness is expressed; we are all familiar with the phenomenon of embarrassment.' (ibid:119)

On the right to participate in a conversation in a desultory and cavalier manner: 'A father sometimes has this right regarding the mealtime conversation maintained by lesser members of the family, while they do not'. (ibid:130)

The reader's presumed familiarity with these commonplace scenes helps to secure the analytic point Goffman wishes to make.

A second practice routinely employed in Goffman's texts involves the use of phrases such as 'of course' which cast the reader into a colloquial relation with the author. If Simmel was a philosopher of the 'perhaps', then Goffman was surely the sociologist of the 'of course'. Here are some examples from chapter 10 of Frame Analysis, 'Breaking frame':

'Of course, frames differ widely in the involvement prescribed for participants sustained them.' (1974:345)

'Now it is apparent that the human body is one of those things that can disrupt the organization of activity...' (ibid:347)

'It is also plain that when an individual misframes events...' (ibid:348)

'But, of course, here the delamination, although not prescribed, is something devoutly sought by the fabricators.' (ibid:366)

'Of course, with neither actors present nor an audience of strangers...' (ibid:367)

Phrases like 'of course' and 'it is apparent' underline the obviousness of the analytic point about to be made to both author and reader and effectively co-opt the reader into assenting its validity. The process of incorporating the reader is also achieved through Goffman's frequent use of 'we' and 'one' in his descriptions:

'Just as we can have preoccupied persons in conversational interaction, so in unfocused interaction we can have "absent-minded" participants...' (1967:133)

'Obviously, in these examples one deals with the limits of a frame...' (1974:353)

'What one has here is not merely upkeyed or downkeyed response...' (ibid:359)

'One might reason that the individual could also break from behavior in one primary framework...' (ibid:375)

'But if one assumes that the sight of the jewels on the table earlier in the evening had excited desires then amply held in check...' (ibid:376)

The use of 'we' and 'one' in these examples is not an instance of a 'royal we' but is rather a device which draws on shared knowledge and reasoning to cast the reader into a collegial relation with the author. It is thus a device which closes the distance between the author's analytic authority and the reader's commonsense knowledge.

A third practice through which Goffman is able to draw the reader into viewing the world in the manner in which he analyses it is through understatement and laconicity. For all his attention to interactional minutiae and the commonplaces of everyday life, there is nevertheless a sparseness and a lightness of touch in his analyses. Ordinary people doing ordinary things may comprise the central focus of his sociology, but he successfully avoids the temptation to belabour the obvious and recycle the self-evident. This practice is sharply manifested in the pictorial section in Gender Advertisements where Goffman exploits our ordinary viewing competence to make sense of the pictorial materials presented in order to promote the analysis of gender displays. Goffman makes his points through relatively brief written interpretations and fairly extensive arrays of pictures. The reader reads Goffman's analysis then looks at the collection of pictures following it to give it substance. Once again, it is the reader's commonsense or prejudices or ordinary viewing competence which is drawn upon to give sense to Goffman's analytic interpretations. But Goffman is anything but heavy-handed in presenting these observations. One example from Goffman 1979:38-39: in noting the difference between how fathers

and sons, and mothers and daughters are represented in advertising pictures, Goffman suggests, 'boys, as it were, have to push their way into manhood and problematic effort is involved' (followed by pictures 89-92) whereas 'girls merely have to unfold' (pictures 93-99). The mutual elaboration of written and pictorial elements of the text which the reader must undertake to make sense of it all is provoked by the laconicity of the written element. The use of pictorial materials in Gender Advertisements highlights the laconicity of Goffman's analyses, but it is a feature endemic to his texts; phenomenologically florid descriptions are studiously avoided.

Thus it can be suggested that the 'modest' and 'unassuming' authorial stance Goffman often takes and the 'seductive' quality of his analyses is not a simple product of an attractive writing style and a predilection for self-deprecating disclaimers, but is evident in the details of the manner in which these analyses are constructed and presented. Three features of Goffman's textual constructions have been identified: the use of illustrations which expressly invoke the reader's commonsense knowledge of social arrangements; the use of expressions which cast the reader into a colloquial relation with the author; and a preference for laconic characterisations of analytic points which demand readers' work for sense to be made of them. Sometimes, however, both Simmel and Goffman seek to be not modest and unassuming but arresting and judgemental. This is primarily achieved through the use of unexpected juxtapositions.

### 5.5.2 Unexpected Juxtapositions

Under this heading will be examined some aspects of the use of paradox, irony and related tropes in the writings of Simmel and Goffman. A strong drive towards unexpected juxtapositions arises from the formal method itself which seeks out similarities between disparate phenomenon at the expense of considering differences. There is, then, a methodological foundation which predisposes both Simmel and Goffman's analyses towards the employment of these tropes. In Goffman's case there is the added veneer of an accomplished grasp of what the literary critic Kenneth Burke calls 'perspective by incongruity'.

Tonnies (1965:51) noted Simmel's talent for finding 'unexpected similarities'. Sometimes these similarities occur in a playful context, as when Simmel attempts to clarify the nature of economic exchange by reference to the constitutive features of the kiss (1978:83). More often, the unexpected similarities arise as a result of Simmel's juxtaposition of illustrative material from a wide range of historical contexts. In the analysis of 'divide and rule' Simmel (1950:162-169) brings together features of the situation of the early Christians in Rome, Anglo-Norman kings in relation to feudal lords, English trades unions in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, party politics under George III, the conquests of the Incas of Ancient Peru, the colonial situation of Australian aborigines, the practices of the Venetian government to suppress dissent, and

the strategies of ancient Rome and nineteenth century Britain as imperial powers.

On occasion Simmel's formalism leads him to ironic formulations, i.e. to see something in a manner opposed to the literal or ostensible understanding of the phenomenon. Simmel proposes that isolation 'represents a very specific relation to society' (1950:120). Or, within monogamous marriage, both cold and intrinsically alienated spouses and passionate and intimate ones may not wish to have a child, the former because it might unify them and the latter because it might separate them (ibid:128). The expression of paradoxical relationship is well served by Simmel's preference for dualistic discursive structures (5.3.2 above) and evidenced, for example, by fashion, which is both an indicator of difference from others and solidarity with a more restricted group of others who aspire toward the same end. The effect of such ironic or paradoxical formulations, as well as the drawing of formal similarities between otherwise apparently disparate situations, is to work on the reader's commonsense, bringing unnoticed features to light or perhaps denying elements of the reader's prejudices.

Goffman appears more aware of the persuasive functions of irony and paradox than Simmel. There is a sombre tone in Simmel's use of paradox, most notable in his analysis of the tragedy of culture. In contrast to the prevailing pathos of Simmel's analyses, Goffman's are often spritely and witty, albeit often with serious and darker undertones; hence his



characterisation in the present discussion as a sociological farceur. Goffman often seeks to instruct his readers by entertaining them. There is a droll, nicely disciplined and understated sense of humour informing his analyses, even when serious and momentous topics are being considered. For example, Goffman's observation about the receipt of a letter-bomb: 'problems are supposed to start in a reading, not in getting down to it' (1974:468). In a similar vein, suicide is described as a 'deeply reidentifying deed' (ibid:278).

Goffman's witticisms are not simply mischievous and superficial stylistic devices grafted on to the serious core of his sociological analyses, but an integral part of them, performing important analytical and persuasion functions. As several commentators have observed (eg Gouldner, 1973; Becker, 1975; Lofland, 1980; Manning, 1980), Goffman has been much influenced by Kenneth Burke's (1965) notion of 'perspective by incongruity' which proposes that understanding is achieved by ironically juxtaposing terms and concepts that are not usually found together. A deliberate dissociation of ideas is sought through 'planned misnomers' which will wrench loose the customary understandings associated with words. The appeal and justification of perspective by incongruity for Goffman's project is easy to comprehend: like metaphor and like the examination of extraordinary situations it serves to illuminate what Garfinkel terms the 'seen but unnoticed' features of daily life. In Goffman's hands it is another device for problematising the taken for granted and for producing an ironic analysis of social

life. Two aspects of Goffman's use of perspective by incongruity will be considered: how it facilitates sociological redescription at the line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph level, and how it engenders the production of theoretical ironies.

Part of the 'charm' or 'sparkling' quality of Goffman's texts derives in part from his mastery of the witty one-liner, the epigram. Some examples:

1. 'The [socially] dead are sorted, but not segregated, and continue to walk among the living.' (1952:463)
2. 'Universal human nature is not a very human thing.' (1967:45)
3. 'Many gods have been done away with, but the individual stubbornly remains as a deity of considerable importance.' (1967:95)
4. 'Life may not be much of a gamble, but interaction is.' (1959:243)
5. 'Social structure gains elasticity; the individual merely loses composure.' (1967:112)
6. 'Those who break the rules of interaction commit their crimes in jail.' (1967:115)
7. 'To be awkward or unkempt, to talk or move wrongly, is to be a dangerous giant, a destroyer of worlds.' (1961b:81)
8. 'A person is a thing of which too much can be asked, and if everything must be asked, it will be at the asker's peril.' (1969:42)

(Simmel was also a master of the aphoristic statement; see esp. Simmel 1923:1-46). These ironic juxtapositions have a subtler impact on the reader's commonsense than, say, outright polemics, for they require rather more in the way of readers' work to appreciate their point than the simple acceptance or rejection of

a value position. Some of these examples employ paradoxical tropes such as antithesis (the balance of contrasting ideas) in 2,4,6 and 8; antiphrasis (the humorous use of words in senses opposed to their conventional meanings) in 1,3 and 7 and oxymoron (the combination of apparently incongruous words) in 3. These examples of perspective by incongruity jar the reader into a new understanding of the phenomenon. Like any successful witticism, brevity is of the essence. Moreover, incongruities also operate in Goffman's prose at the sub-sentence level, most notably in person descriptors such as 'boys of eight to fourteen and other profane persons' (1959:123) and 'a New York specialist in the arts of vagrancy' (1963b:44). Perspective by incongruity is thus built into the detail of Goffman's prose. It often operates to invert the reader's prejudices, elevating the lowly (vagrants) and deflating the exalted (young boys; note also the treatment of the respected professions in Presentation).

Perspective by incongruity is a helpful tactic to promote the formal impulse in Goffman's sociology, enabling substantive differences to be de-emphasised and formal similarities highlighted. As was noted in section 5.3.3, this involves a process of sociological redescription of the illustrative material which provides the reader with an instructed reading of that material. Watson (1987) provides a sociological analysis of this textual practise. He proposes that Sacks' (1972) membership categorisation analytic apparatus can be applied to Goffman's generalisations and examples to delineate in detail the interpretive work required for readers to detect the

patterning which Goffman's analysis deems salient and noticeable. The procedure fundamentally involves the identification of certain analytic membership categorisations (such as 'audience' and 'performer') which then instruct the reader to perform certain 'category-mapping' activities on the illustrative material in accordance with the consistency rule (see esp. Watson 1987:5-8). This is a contribution to the analysis of the operative structure of Goffman's actual use of Burke's method.

Perspective by incongruity also facilitates the production of some of the broader ironies in Goffman's texts. Throughout 'Performances' (1959:ch.1) Goffman chisels away at the reader's commonsense view of reality and appearances. To think that there are real, sincere and honest performers on the one hand and apparent, contrived and false ones on the other is 'the ideology of honest performers, providers, strength to the show they put on, but a poor analysis of it' (1959:70). A sociological analysis of performances shows that both kinds are constructed from the same expressive resources. Thus a distinction between real and contrived performances has little validity and the point is underlined in Goffman's distinction between sincere and cynical performers which turns on the belief that each has about the 'realness' of the performance; the former do believe the impression they foster is real, the latter do not (ibid:17-18). Sincerity and cynicism, reality and appearance, are not two different kinds of thing but merely functions of the beliefs of performers, and sometimes, as in the instance of

Kroeber's Shamans (ibid:21), cynicism and sincerity can be mixed in the same performance.

Goffman's use of irony is most clearly self-evident in his work on the mental patient. The mental hospital is subsumed under the broader category of 'total institutions'; this is an analytic but also a deeply persuasive device. The reader is constantly urged to consider how mental patients are treated in a kindred manner to inmates of less benign organisations such as prisons, military barracks and concentration camps. Goffman expressly sets out to colour the reader's thinking about the mental patient's situation; as he put it in an early formulation of his ideas, 'I use a slanted vocabulary in order to rouse [people] in a quiet way to see how bad things really are' (1957c:122-123). The choice of the term 'institution' in 'total institution' is partly motivated by this concern. Goffman exploits its commonsense meaning as a type of organisation an individual would be averse to entering. There is also an analytical justification for the choice: the total institution is 'more than a formal organisation' but 'less than a community' (1961a:110). Even here, however, a persuasive element enters; in the earlier formulation it is described as 'a kind of monster, a sociological hybrid, half community and half-instrumentally-oriented organization' (1957c:119). In the work on mental patients irony extends beyond concept naming and the line-by-line level to the theoretical portrayal of the patient's lot. Many of the hospital's practices are described as far removed from therapy: admission procedures involve

'mortification of self'; the inmate's signs of resistance are re-interpreted as evidence for his sickness ('looping', 1961:35ff). Admission to mental hospital is not determined by demonstrable evidence of illness but merely by 'career contingencies' (ibid:134ff). A 'betrayal funnel' (ibid:140) operates in which those closest to the mental patient put their interests above his. Custodial and therapeutic goals of the hospital conflict, so that 'to be made a patient is to be remade into a serviceable object, the irony being that so little service is available once this is done' (ibid:379). The prejudices of the reader which Goffman works on in Asylums include the idea that mental patients really are 'sick' people and the idea that mental hospitals are places of therapy where the patient is sent by those who care for him in order that he will get better. Incongruous juxtapositions of mental hospitals and concentration camps, patients and inmates, admission procedures and mortification processes, psychiatric consultations and betrayal funnels, all facilitate Goffman's deeply ironical view.

#### 5.6 The Rhetorical Turn

In this chapter an attempt has been made to specify some features of the style of the texts of Simmel and Goffman. It has considered some of the continuities and dissimilarities between the texts of each author in order to make a small contribution to what has been described as 'the rhetorical turn' (Simons, 1989) in the human sciences.

The chapter has argued that the stylistic features of their texts are no less important than the usual criteria of methodological adequacy considered in chapter 4 for any proper appreciation of their contribution to sociology. This amounts to more than a simple claim that Simmel and Goffman's styles are their methods. Certainly, Goffman might have learned from reading Simmel that style is an important ingredient for sociological writings to gain wide acceptance, and more specifically he may have taken Simmel as an exemplar of the possibilities that the essay format and the employment of metaphor afford the sociologist working in a context of discovery and committed to an exploratory project. Rather, the claim is more fundamental. Any kind of sociological understanding requires not just understanding on the part of the individual sociologist, but the communication of that understanding to an audience. That is the point where the standard concerns of rhetoric with the process of the communication of ideas and the persuasion of an audience enter. Thus the focus of this chapter and the previous one are equal and complementary.

There can be no doubt that there is much more work that needs to be done on the rhetorical dimensions of the texts of Simmel and Goffman. The idiosyncrasy and distinctiveness of their styles and the innovative scope of their respective sociologies make the task an urgent one if a fuller appreciation of what makes their writings not only 'interesting' but 'classic' (cf. Davis 1971, 1986) is to be developed.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE INDIVIDUAL

#### 6.1 Terms for the Human Being

This chapter describes and compares some aspects of the views of the individual presented by Simmel and Goffman. As section 4.2 above indicated, the primary aim of their formal sociologies is to elucidate the features of the forms of sociation and the interaction order. As these are conceived as emerging from the actions of individuals, some attention needs to be given to the 'psychological presuppositions' of the human beings who comprise the 'ultimate materials' of the special social sciences they construct. Thus, although a subsidiary concern, both Simmel and Goffman construct important sociological conceptions of the individual in their work. As the review of Simmel's work in chapter 1 indicated, he was fascinated by the problem of individuality, and the title of Levine's (1971) collection, On Individuality and Social Forms, captures what is unquestionably a leading motif of his sociology. But the theme extended beyond his sociology; he was the author of books on historically distinguished individuals such as Kant (1904), Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (1907), Goethe (1913) and Rembrandt (1916). For Goffman, the issue of the individual may be secondary to the analysis of the forms of the interaction order, but his early fame and notoriety arose principally as a result of his controversial portrayal of the individual.

The individual thus constitutes one natural point of comparison between the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman. A



further justification for examining their conceptions of the individual is the repeated observation that all sociological theories make assumptions about human nature (eg Dahrendorf, 1968:98-106; Gouldner, 1971:30-31; Mills, 1970:247; Wrong, 1961). These assumptions warrant close scrutiny not only because of their ethical dimensions, but also because they provide access to the analyst's fundamental beliefs about the nature of social being and social action.

In view of the ambiguity surrounding the concept of the individual and cognate notions it may be helpful to begin with a terminological digression about the common terms used to describe the human being. Whilst the following discussion in no way sets limits on Simmel's and Goffman's own useages, it may help to clarify some of the common meanings associated with these terms.

The Oxford English Dictionary (1933) indicates the complexity of the history of these terms. The modern concept of the individual as a single human being does not appear to have been widely current in written English before the seventeenth century. Earlier useages emphasised the idea of 'oneness' or 'indivisibility'. This early meaning is also present in the logician's notion of the individual as 'an object which is determined by properties peculiar to itself and cannot be subdivided into others of the same kind' (V, 1933:223). In reference to single human beings, the modern concept of the individual carries certain connotations of singularity and distinctness.

The term 'person' has very different associations. It derives from the Latin word persona, a mask used by an actor in a dramatic play, although it is interesting to note that the OED is emphatic that 'the sense mask has not come down into English' (VII, 1933:724). Unlike 'individual', the concept of the 'person' clearly refers to human beings, although there is a legal meaning referring to collectivities which are considered to possess certain rights and duties. The earliest use of 'person', dating from the first half of the thirteenth century, emphasises a human being acting in some capacity.

The earliest useages of 'personality' employ the term to distinguish a personal being from a thing. The modern meaning of 'that quality or assemblage of qualities which makes a person what he is, as distinct from other persons' (VII, 1933:727) dates from the late eighteenth century.

Perhaps most complex of all is 'self', a term whose 'ultimate etymology is obscure' (IX, 1933:409) but which figures in a range of grammatical constructions dating back to Old English. Two meanings of self as a noun are presented:

'What one is at a particular time or in a particular aspect or relation; one's nature, character or (sometimes) physical constitution or appearance, considered as different at different times.'

'An assemblage of characteristics and dispositions which may be conceived as constituting one of various personalities within a human being.' (ibid, p.411)

Thus, the individual human being may consist of a number of selves, and these may change. The OED also supplies a 'chiefly philosophical' meaning of the self as:

'That which in a person is really and intrinsically he (in contradistinction to what is adventitious); the ego (often identified with the soul or mind as opposed to the body); a permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness.' (ibid, p.410)

This definition emphasises what is essential in the individual and suggests a specific, primordial subjectivity.

Finally, the 'soul'. In its non-theological meaning in reference to individual human beings it is 'the principle of thought and action... commonly regarded as an entity distinct from the body; the spiritual part of man in contrast to the purely physical' (OED, 1989, XVI:40). It refers to the essential, animating features of the individual.

Simmel uses the term individual extensively, although as we shall see he also has some interesting remarks to make on the soul. Goffman's sociology seldom makes reference to the metaphysically-weighted notion of the soul, but frequently employs the terms individual, person and self. One reason for this terminological digression is that both authors frequently draw upon the ordinary meanings of these terms, leaning on them in their analyses up to the point where they introduce their own specific definitions and conclusions. In other words, in conducting their analyses both writers capitalise upon the vagueness and imprecision of ordinary useage as a kind of holding

device which enables discussion to proceed up to the point where they choose to establish their own parameters of the individual, the self and so on.

It has been argued that the concept of the individual or the person is universal to human thought (Strawson, 1959; Mauss, 1985) although of course the precise sense attached to the concept varies historically and culturally. Simmel and Goffman make important contributions to an understanding of the social determinations of the individual. The overall argument of this chapter will be that whilst Simmel resisted the complete 'socialization of the spirit', his sociology nevertheless makes some considerable inroads into the social determination of the individual; and that Goffman, whilst endeavouring to press to the limit the social determination of the individual, is nevertheless obliged to acknowledge the existence of certain unique qualities of the individual which are resistant to sociological analysis. This argument will be demonstrated in the following review of the leading features of his thinking of Simmel and Goffman on the individual.

## 6.2 Simmel: Against the Socialisation of the Spirit

Simmel's thinking on the individual and individuality is complex and many-sided. Nearly all his writing touches in some way or other on the theme of individuality - in society, in history and in the arts especially. Sometimes he suggests that the individual is not an object of cognition, but an object of experience (1950:6). His sociology assumes that the individual

is at least partly an objective structure determined by participation in the forms of sociation. In other contexts (1971:36) he suggests that individual is a methodological concept, a point of view from which the contents of human experience can be ordered.

Among all these differing and wavering formulations there is an important underlying theme which Wolff describes as an attempt to preserve the autonomy of the human spirit against various attempts of the social sciences to socialise it. According to Wolff, Simmel recognises that his sociology could be seen as:

'... part of that modern attitude which is interested (and often in a metaphysically not disinterested manner) in socializing the spirit: in conceiving of mind as a product, or by-product, of society, in locating, tracing and finding mind in society (a footnote refers to the work of Cooley, Mead and Dewey). But Simmel did not want to socialize the spirit: he wished (half-heartedly in his sociology and wholeheartedly elsewhere) to preserve its autonomy. He insisted that the realms of the objective and also of the individual are coordinate with the social realm; and he may also have wanted to save the spirit by finding 'subject matter' for sociology - for otherwise, its subject matter might become the whole world.' (1950:xxxvii)

Wolff suggests that the specification of formal sociology as a special social science which sharply delineated a topic-matter (the forms of sociation) and an approach to it (abstraction of the forms from the multiplicity of reality) was in part designed to guard against a 'pre-empting' of the human spirit.

Simmel's perspectivism or relativism supports this theme. Complete knowledge of the totality, whether it be an individual or a society, is simply not possible. Our partial knowledge is underlined by Simmel's predilection for describing our knowledge of others and relationships as 'fragmentary' (eg 1950:152, 200, 308, 312, 355). The opposition to a total socialisation of the spirit is very much in evidence in 'How is society possible?' (cf. sections 1.4 1.6.3 and 4.3); for example:

'All of us are fragments, not only of general man, but of ourselves. We are outlines not only of the types "man", "good", "bad" and the like but also of the individuality and uniqueness of ourselves.'  
(1959b:343-344)

The first sociological apriority grants that knowledge of others is mediated through typifications but the second insists that social being is only possible because there is a non-social element in the individual. The first apriority suggests a measure of social determinism which the second counters. The third apriority acknowledges the need for individuals to be fulfilled through their social activities, and this is brought about by the roles which society offers. The apriorities thus attempt to strike a balance between the demands of individuality and sociality.

The balance so struck is reiterated in the final chapter of Sociology where Simmel proposes that 'a person is never merely a collective being, just as he is never merely an individual being' (1971:261; see also *ibid*:267). Yet Simmel was

haunted by the possibility of a completely socially determined existence, as his remarks on 'extreme state socialism' (1.5.5 above) suggest: he envisages the possibility of social activity standing far above the psychological reality and individual differentiation of human beings (1978:296-297). In one of his late essays he worries over the tendency for nineteenth century writers to view the individual 'as a mere point of intersection for social series, or even as a fiction like the atom' (1968:14). Rescue from the 'complete submergence of self in society' was only provided at the end of the century by the emergence of the concept of 'life'.

Simmel also suggests that 'innumerable tragedies' are created by the radical contrast 'between subjective life, which is restless and finite in time, and its contents, which, once they are created, are fixed but timelessly valid' (1968:27). The 'tragedy of culture' is the best known of these. But Simmel also recognises that the group has a significance over the individual because the group is immortal (1898:671; 1950:26). Forms of sociation tend to persist longer than the individuals who animate them. This is one basis of the sociological tragedy.

None of this should come as any surprise from an author who endeavoured to be sociology's Kant. Kant emphasised that cognition was an active and creative process involving the ordering of sense-impressions by the categories of the human mind. The transcendental ego imposes the categories on phenomena and it is this ego or self which inhabits the privileged noumenal

world which is not subject to the laws of nature but only to the dictates of moral duty. The ego or self is by definition free. Moreover, as a free being the individual is endowed with a measure of human dignity, for he is capable of choice and of exercising responsibility for his actions. Importantly, other individuals must be treated as ends in their own right and never merely as means for the realisation of personal interests. (It is precisely the reduction of the other to a means by both parties in prostitution which makes the relationship so morally repugnant to Simmel; see 1978:376-380.) Yet, as we shall see in the next section of this chapter Simmel suggests a range of social determinations of the individual which considerably circumscribe the freedom of the ego.

Thus Simmel's antipathy towards the socialisation of the spirit has its roots in his Kantianism. It is worth emphasising that Simmel's thinking on the individual is pre-Meadian and pre-psychoanalytic, which serves to emphasise the intellectual distance between his views and those of Goffman which are very much post-Meadian and post-psychoanalytic. Yet for all that, Simmel displays considerable sensitivity in his treatment of the individual in both sociological and psychological aspects. He was, as his contemporaries recognised, a master of psychological microscopy, and this aspect of his work is also indicative of the antipathy to the socialisation of the spirit.



Consider, for example, Simmel's distinction between the mind and the soul:

'Mind is the objective content of what the soul becomes aware of as a living function. The soul is... the form that the mind, that is the logical-conceptual content of thought, assumes for our subjectivity, as our subjectivity.' (1978:466)

Or the following observation about the transcendental character of the soul:

'A soul is never only what it represents at a given moment, it is always "more", a higher level and more perfect manifestation of itself, unreal, and yet somehow eternally present.' (1968:27-28)

The personality (an overlapping category to the soul for Simmel) is described in similar language:

'Personality itself is completely outside any arithmetic concept. Therefore, when we speak of the "whole" personality, of its "unity", of a "part" of it, we intend to convey something qualitative and intimate, something which can be experienced only through intuition. We have no direct expression for it...' (1950:202)

But there is an 'enigmatic unity' (1978:296) to the soul or personality of the individual which cannot be directly grasped by others, only synthesised out of the fragments that the other makes available. Simmel maintains we must necessarily fall back upon some notion of the 'secret of the other', those 'moods and qualities of being' (1950:333) in order to understand the ordinary talk and conduct of other people. As we shall see,

statements like these embody conceptions of the individual which Goffman's sociology seeks to 'combat'.

Two images recur in Simmel's treatment of the personality (Levine, 1965:97-98). First of all, the personality is seen as a unity of interacting elements in a manner consonant with his view of the forms of sociation and his 'regulative world principle'. It arbitrates between duty and desire (1955:49), or conflicting duties (1950:230). Secondly there is a core-periphery image. The innermost core is hard to shift (ibid:248) whilst the periphery comprises 'momentary impulses and isolated irritabilities' (ibid:300). Within this broad framework Simmel offers a range of subtle psychological observations; for example, on the difference between the 'strong' and the 'decided' personality (ibid:137), or on irreconciliability and forgiveness (1955:122).

One further feature of Simmel's psychology is worth comment: his view that human beings are 'differentiating creatures' whose minds are 'stimulated by the difference between a momentary impression and the one which preceded it' (1950:410). The metropolis considerably heightens the range and speed of impressions available to the individual. Elsewhere Simmel proposes that our 'whole psychological nature is built upon our sensitiveness of difference' (1898:46). Human beings, as it were, are programmed to notice differences and take for granted the common ground. This suggests to Simmel that the individual's

sense of separateness from others arises from a psychological universal, the tendency to differentiate.

### 6.3 The Social Differentiation of the Individual

#### 6.3.1 The Consequences of Large-Scale Processes of Change

Simmel's suggestion that the individual is a differentiating being is complemented by his analysis of the social differentiation of the individual's personality. He writes:

'A man, taken as a whole, is, so to speak, a somewhat unformed complex of contents, powers, potentialities; only according to the motivations and relationships of a changing existence he is articulated into a differentiated, defined structure. As an economic and political agent, as a member of a family or a profession, he is, so to speak, an ad hoc construction... the man, as a social creature, is also a unique structure, occurring in no other connection.'  
(1949:256)

The social differentiation of the individual varies according to the degree of differentiation of the society of which he is a member. Societies with high levels of homogeneity do not create the conditions for people to possess different experiences and attitudes. More differentiated societies provide individuals with a wide range of group affiliations in which to develop their uniqueness and individuality (cf. 1.6.8 above).

The significance of social differentiation for Simmel is that it changes the basis on which people interact. Group formation shifts from a basis in ascriptive, emotional and

self-interested (ie 'organic') criteria to intellectual ('rational') criteria (1955:134-137). Groups determined by some interest or purpose distinct from organic criteria emerge in Europe after the Renaissance. The result of this process is that 'the individual as a moral personality comes to be circumscribed in an entirely new way' (ibid:141). Multiple group affiliations contribute to the differentiation of the individual, but they are also productive of problems and difficulties including 'psychological tensions and even a schizophrenic break' (ibid).

Accompanying the differentiation process is the tendency for groups to become enlarged and this also contributes to the individuation of the personality (cf.6.2.1). By 'group enlargement' Simmel includes numerical and spatial expansion as well as a growth in 'significance and content of life' (1950:417). Large groups provide more opportunity for the expression of individuality because they make smaller and more specific demands on the individual. Simmel contrasts the situation of the member of the old German guilds who is tightly bound to the group and who faces restrictions on when and where he can work with the situation of the modern wage-labourer or member of a voluntary association (1971:256) who enjoys considerable greater freedom of movement and has to meet only very specific obligations.

The process of social differentiation increases the individual's opportunities for multiple group affiliations and contributes to the enlargement of social groups. The growth of a

fully monetarised economy promotes both these trends. The significance of the advent of a money economy for the individual is discussed in chapter 1 (see esp.1.5.5 and 1.5.7). Simmel's analysis is certainly not univocal. On the one hand money contributes to a positive conception of individual freedom, the freedom to purchase goods, services, memberships, etc (1978:321). On the other hand, money's freedom is negative in character, freeing the individual from onerous burdens which can be paid for (ibid:400). A money economy helps to break down feudal obligations and thus contributes to the freedom of the individual (ibid:289ff) but on the other hand it breeds a calculative outlook (ibid:444ff) which is destructive of personalism and which promotes personal and interpersonal estrangement (ibid:454ff). The advent of a money economy is the macro-level source of these changes but Simmel consistently analyses these changes in terms of their consequences for the relationship and experience of the individual. His conclusions are pessimistic: at the very best the money economy brings mixed blessings for individuals.

### 6.3.2 The Social and the Individual Level

In Simmel's work there is often the implication that the individual exists apart from society. This can be seen in his programmatic statements in which the contents of social life are seen to reside in the psychology and biology of individuals. These contents animate the forms of sociation. More generally, in the great dialectic between life and form it is individuals

who are seen as the bearers of life's creative energies. The conflict between the interests of the individual and the interests of society is a chronic tension which keeps open the pathways of social change. Simmel states:

'Concord, harmony, co-efficacy, which are unquestionably held to be socializing forces, must nevertheless be interspersed with distance, competition, repulsion, in order to yield the actual configuration of society. The solid, organizational forms which seem to constitute or create society must constantly be disturbed, disbalanced, gnawed-at by individualistic, irregular forces, in order to gain their vital reaction and development through submission and resistance.'  
(1950:315)

As the second apriority emphasises, the individual is a social being but not wholly socialised. The interests of the individual may conflict with those of the group. As was noted above (section 6.2), one of Simmel's core images of the psychology of the individual is as an arena of interacting and possibly conflicting elements. Simmel further argues that there may be within an individual 'impulses and interests that are not pre-empted by his social character' (1950:58) and thus if a conflict between the individual and society does arise it is a continuation of a conflict within the individual. He certainly does not wish to postulate any essential asocial or anti-social interest within the individual.

It would be a mistake to suggest that Simmel posits too radical a contrast between the individual and society. For one thing, both individual and society are seen in some sense as abstractions. His formal sociology, in focussing on forms of

sociation in statu nascendi, underlines the contribution that the individual makes to the actualisation of the forms in any given instance. It would also be a mistake to regard the contents of social life as simply a set of psychological and biological propensities. As Simmel indicates in his essay on sociability, these forms can become autonomous and thus provide the individual with the contents which animate sociation. These contents are thus social in character. Another example of the social nature of subjective purposes and impulses occurs in Simmel's essay on religion, where he suggests that 'our subjective life interests', such as religious feelings, flow from the 'social totality' (1905:272-273).

However, Simmel's imagery does seem at times to posit a sharp distinction between the individual and society which is qualified in other writings. In his last contribution to sociology, Basic Questions (1917) he attempts a clarification. In the context of his newly-formulated 'general sociology' (see 1.8) he asks what are 'the characteristics which distinguish social from individual life' (1950:26)? The characteristics Simmel identifies can be summarised as follows:

1. The determinateness of the group and the vacillation of the individual. Whereas the individual may be caught between egoistic and altruistic impulses, the group or mass is more certain in its aims.
2. The individual and the group member. The individual can be separated into those qualities and behaviours which are shared with other members of the group and those which constitute his private property. The former tend to be less complex and closer to 'the immediate manifestations and necessities of life' than the latter.

3. The sociological significance of individual similarity and dissimilarity. The individual is more interested in the dissimilar and particular qualities of others. However, the basis of group formation and unity lies in the similarities shared between individuals.
4. The individual's superiority over the mass. This is explained by the way we tend to evaluate qualities and conduct differing from others more highly than we do those shared with others.
5. The actions of the mass vs. the actions of the individual. In contrast to most individual actions, the actions of the mass may be fuelled by simple and emotional appeals. (Simmel cites as one example the frequently banal nature of politicians' humour: 'what embarrassingly harmless quips scatter parliamentary records with the annotation "Laughter!"; *ibid*:36.) This lends to the mass a potential for radical action largely absent from the actions of individuals.
6. The level of society approximates to a lowest common denominator. Simmel suggests that 'what is common to all can be the property of only those who possess least' (*ibid*:37).

The somewhat elitist assumptions built into this list, which equates the individual with the distinctive, underlines Simmel's valuation of individuality. If the distinction between the individual and the social appears overdrawn in this list, we might note that it is a product of his general sociology. Simmel's formal sociology presents a rather more complex picture of the relation. Simmel's examination of reciprocal knowledge in social relationships will serve as an illustration.

### 6.3.3 Reciprocal Knowledge and Social Relationships

Simmel's discussion of types of social relationships by degrees of reciprocal knowledge of their participants (1950:317-329) occurs in the fifth chapter of Sociology, 'The



secret and the secret society' (see 1.6.7). He addresses the differing degrees of reciprocal knowledge of the total personalities of individuals in various social relationships. Groups based on some particular interest factor out a large part of the total personality of the individual member. In business dealings, jointly pursued scholarly endeavours or agreements struck between political leaders, the knowledge of the other required for the satisfactory prosecution of the relationship is sharply circumscribed to a very specific area. This is also true of relationships of 'acquaintance', which depend only on 'knowledge of the that of the personality, not of its what' (ibid:320). Discretion is called for in relationships between acquaintances. There is a requirement to stay away from all knowledge not expressly revealed by the other; a requirement to respect the 'ideal sphere' surrounding the individual in order to respect his personality, honour and 'intellectual private property' (ibid:322).

More of 'the secret of the other' is disclosed in relationships of friendship and love, and potentially more in the former than the latter relationship according to Simmel: 'this entering of the whole individual ego into the relationship may be more plausible in friendship than in love for the reason that friendship lacks the specific concentration upon one element which love derives from its sensuousness' (ibid:325). But running against this potentiality in the friendship relationship is the individualisation of persons in the modern world which makes mutual receptivity and understanding hard to obtain. Under

modern circumstances friendships themselves tend to become differentiated.

A balance between self-revelation and discretion is particularly difficult to strike in the case of the contemporary marriage in which the intimate relationship is increasingly valued over the conventional and material motives for the union. The early stage of the relationship may be marked by unreserved disclosures and an almost complete absence of discretion. However, unless both individuals have 'an inexhaustable reservoir of latent psychological possessions', this must give way to a degree of reciprocal discretion if the relationship is not to lapse into 'a trivial habituation without charm, into a matter-of-factness which has no longer any room for surprises' (ibid:328, 329).

Simmel highlights the boundaries of the individual and the varying entitlements to encroach upon those boundaries. His subtle analysis shows how the individual personality is not only guarded by social practices but is also constituted through those practices. The point is made obtusely, in Simmel's characteristically opaque prose:

'The other individual must give us not only gifts we may accept, but the possibility of giving him - hopes, idealizations, hidden beauties, attractions of which not even he is conscious. But the place we deposit all this, which we produce, but produce for him, is the indistinct horizon of his personality, the interstitial realm, in which faith replaces knowledge.' (1950:329; emphasis in original)

#### 6.4 Interpretations of Individuality

Simmel was greatly interested in the history and types of individuality. This is evident not only in The Philosophy of Money (see esp. 1978:ch.4 and section 1.5.5 above) but also in his discussion of the eighteenth and nineteenth century conceptions of individuality (Simmel 1901; 1950:58-84; 1971:271-274; 286-288; see also 1.6.12 above). The eighteenth century view posited a benevolent human nature that was bonded and constrained by traditional institutions. If individuals could be freed from these oppressive constraints the full diversity of their talents and powers would be allowed to unfold. The eighteenth century view sought a break with tradition which would enable the individual to flourish as a separate unit. The nineteenth century view in contrast sought a break with contemporaries rather than predecessors. It sought not liberation from historical traditions but from current conventions. It emphasised the uniqueness of the individual in contrast to other members of society, his 'enigmatic unfathomableness' (1950:79). The eighteenth century advocated an individualisation of 'singleness'; the nineteenth century, an individualism of 'uniqueness' (ibid:81). Alternatively, Simmel labels the eighteenth century view 'quantitative' because of its comprehension of the structural preconditions of individuality, whilst the nineteenth century view is described as 'qualitative' because of its grasp of the substance of individuality.

Simmel himself sometimes appears to endorse the nineteenth century conception of individuality, for example in his sketch of the individual and social levels. In that respect he was a creature of his time. Lipman (1959:135) suggests that Simmel tended to take the nineteenth century view as definitive. He did not. Rather, Simmel looks forward to a future in which new types of individualism will emerge, a future in which there will be 'ever more numerous and varied forms for the human personality to affirm itself and to demonstrate the value of its existence' (1950:84).

Simmel thus presents a view of the individual which is informed by an historical analysis of the influence of changing material (the money economy) and ideological (the views on individuality of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) circumstances. To these large-scale social influences on the individual Simmel adds formulations drawn from his formal sociology (eg. reciprocal knowledge) and general sociology (the social and individual levels). Additionally, there are conceptions of the individual which arise from his philosophical sociology (the apriorities) and his psychological microscopy. Not surprisingly, the picture of the individual which emerges is complex and many-sided.

At the outset it was suggested that Simmel stood against the complete socialisation of the spirit and this manifests itself in the tension between the individual and the social in his writings. Yet his sociology displays numerous

social determinations of the individual. It cannot be pretended that Simmel was in any sense a rigid social determinist. His emphasis upon an interactional conception of society rules out that interpretation. Simmel certainly did not regard the forms of sociation as simple social determinants but rather stressed their duality (cf. the 'dignity' of the forms, chapter 4 above) as enabling and constraining structures. Simmel saw social norms as products of interaction (Mayntz, 1968), not as standards existing in a logic of exteriority and constraint in the manner of (some versions of) Durkheim and structural-functionalism. His sociology was also, as has been argued in chapter 4, part of a larger project to 'de-intellectualise' or 'de-cognitivise' Kant. In undertaking that project he preserves Kant's view of a free, choosing and responsible individual. That individual, of course, occupies the noumenal realm whilst his sociology addresses the phenomenal world. There Simmel was able to demonstrate a multiplicity of social bases and determinations of the individual, thereby suggesting that the noumenal might be a smaller, more restricted realm than previously believed.

#### 6.5 Goffman: Against the Touching Tendency to Keep a Part of the World Safe from Sociology

The overall thrust of Goffman's thinking about the individual runs in the opposite direction to Simmel's. Simmel's fear was that sociology might abstract too much and pre-empt the spirit; Goffman's central concern is that sociology has not, in treating the individual, abstracted enough. The clearest

statement of this concern is found on the last page of 'Role distance' where Goffman comments on the 'vulgar tendency' of sociologists to attribute the obligatory part of the individual's conduct to the 'profane' sphere of social roles whilst reserving 'personal' matters and the warmth, spontaneity and humour of the individual to a 'sacred' category beyond the remit of sociological analysis. Goffman's intention in introducing the concept of role distance is 'to combat this touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology' (1961b:152). Role distance is the concept Goffman devises to capture those manifestations of personal style traditionally reserved to the sacred sphere. It offers a sociological analysis of those activities through which the individual's idiosyncracies and 'personality' are displayed.

A very general and central theme of Goffman's sociology is its persistent attempt to socially ground the individual, to suggest hitherto unenvisaged sociological determinisms which principally spring from the interaction order. The 'rules of comingling' which organise that order comprise a new set of social determinants which address the details of the individual's ordinary conduct and experience. The general direction of Goffman's thinking is opposed to a concept of 'real self', a romantic humanism or sentimentality garbed in metaphysical clothes. Goffman's approach to the individual is, in intention, thoroughly empirical, and in the identification of the rules and practices of the interaction order he finds a new and potent sociological determinism which reveals the incursion of 'the

finger tips of society' (1963b:53) into everyday minutiae. Thus, in introducing the concept of personal identity which articulates the ways an individual comes to be known as a 'unique' person, Goffman notes how 'the term unique is subject to pressure by maiden social scientists who would make something warm and creative out of it, a something not to be further broken down, at least by sociologists' (ibid:56) but then proceeds to provide just such a sociological breakdown.

Goffman develops the 'social behaviorism' of G.H. Mead (1932:176-195; 1934:1-8) which holds that the proper approach to the self lies not in introspection but in inspecting the individual's conduct to see what implications might be drawn about self. Self is to be approached from without, from conduct. As we shall see, Goffman is especially, but not exclusively, concerned with how conceptions of self are built up and influenced by face-to-face conduct. In order to accomplish this task a range of 'technically-defined terms' need to be introduced because the notions 'individual' and 'person' prove imprecise for 'fine-grain analysis' (1971:3-5, 27). Part of the purpose of this chapter is to provide an ordering of these terms, an ordering that is lacking in Goffman's writings.

Broadly speaking, Goffman presents a sociological approach to the individual which tries, as far as possible, to present a view unbroken by non-social assumptions. This aspect of Goffman's approach is highlighted in a neglected paper by Helmer (1970) who suggests that in 'On face-work' we find 'the

face of the man without qualities'. The 1955 paper conceives of the individual in 'extrinsic-modular' terms. The individual is seen as composed of extrinsic properties which require reference to other things (the dynamics of encounters) and is regarded by Goffman in modular terms, that is in terms of how the individual 'works' in interaction. Thus, for example, emotion is seen as an extrinsic property, as a move in a ritual game (1967:23); the actions of the individual are described in modular terms as accomplishing the maintenance and saving of face. Personal qualities become the property of the interaction order rather than the individual. Goffman's sociology repeatedly shows how matters which might commonsensically be regarded as properties of the psychology of the individual can be adequately reconceptualised as part of our socialised competence as interactants.

This feature of Goffman's sociology has led to comparisons with the attempts of continental structuralists to 'delete' or 'decentre' the subject (eg Jameson, 1976; Gonos, 1977; Denzin and Keller, 1981). Goffman's response to this interpretation was to distance himself from this brand of structuralism whilst acknowledging that 'if the result of my approach can be construed as "decentering" the self, then I am happy to be in the vanguard, providing it is appreciated that this does not mean a lack of interest in the self, merely an effort to approach its figuring from additional directions' (1981b:62). The problem with traditional sociological analysis is that it 'breaks up the individual into multiple roles but does



not suggest that further "decimation" is required (1974:516). Goffman's writings offer a range of such 'decimations', and a major part of his work is the attempt 'to make the self a visible, sociological phenomenon' (Anderson et al, 1985:152). But it is pertinent to ask if this is a legitimate sociological task or whether it is properly a topic best left to other disciplines.

Goffman's own argument in this question is set out in the 'Introduction' to Interaction Ritual:

'I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another. Nonetheless, since it is individual actors who contribute to ultimate materials, it will always be reasonable to ask what general properties they must have if this sort of contribution is to be expected of them. What minimal mode of the actor is needed if we are to wind him up, stick him in amongst his fellows, and have an orderly traffic of behavior emerge? What minimal model is required if the student is to anticipate the lines along which an individual, qua interactant, can be effective or break down... A psychology is necessarily involved, but one stripped and cramped to suit the sociological study of conversation, track meets, banquets, jury trials and street loitering.

Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men.' (1967:2-3)

Although the 'syntactical relations' among the acts of copresent persons are the proper focus, some consideration of the general properties of the individual as an interactant is an important if secondary concern and it is this kind of psychology which is 'necessarily involved'. The psychology of Goffman is thus thoroughly conditioned by sociological concerns. Schegloff

(1988:93-100) disagrees with this portrayal of Goffman's analytical priorities and argues that Goffman is more interested in the individual than the syntax of interaction. Many critics (eg Miller 1986) complain of Goffman's excessively sociological characterisation of the individual. However for Schegloff any interest in the individual as such constitutes a betrayal of the principles informing the discipline. The contrast between Schegloff's conversation analysis and Goffman's approach might be expressed as a difference between the proponents of sociology and social behaviorism respectively. Conversation analysis manifests a sociology in its exclusive concern for the syntax of interaction, uncluttered by talk of interaction's implications for self. Goffman in contrast presents a sociological variant of G.H. Mead's social behaviorism. The experience of the individual is approached from without, from features of the conduct of the individual. For Mead, the experience of the individual is one 'phase' of social activity and Mead attempts to show how that experience arises in the social process (Mead, 1934:7-8). Like Mead, Goffman is interested in what can be inferred about the individual from conduct, and this is one restricted sense in which it is valid to speak of Goffman as a social psychologist. That label was not one which Goffman was ever much inclined to embrace (but see 1981b:62).

Schegloff (1988:95) acknowledges that the psychology necessarily involved is not a conventional psychology. In Goffman's case the interest in the individual probably stems from

his reading of James, Cooley and Mead, although as Joas (1987:106n.29) suggests, there are no clear links between his work and the basic premises of pragmatism. The question remains, does sociology need a concept of the individual or self as part of its analytical apparatus? Allport (1968) asks the same question about psychology and notes that the concept can become an impediment to understanding if it is used as a category under which ill-comprehended processes are subsumed. Allport's answer is that it all depends on the useage of self that is proposed; provided question-begging notions such as 'the self chooses' are excluded, then it is an appropriate and valid concept. Goffman appears to be aware of this danger, for example in his critique of the 'black box' model of the interactant employed by some linguists who view the individual as an agent who may respond in varying degrees of candour to questions, requests etc from information stored inside his head (1974:511-516). For Goffman the individual or self is a legitimate analytical category for sociology if a consistently social accounting is provided.

#### 6.6 Social Constructions of the Individual

In Goffman's writings, unlike those of Simmel, there are a number of 'technically defined terms' for the individual, but in common with Simmel there is no overall and unambiguous ordering of these terms. The remainder of this chapter presents one possible ordering. The framework suggested draws upon Czyzewski's (1987) reconstruction of Goffman's ideas about the individual. Czyzewski identifies a 'main line' of conceptions

phrased in terms of the interactional functions the individual fulfills. The main line is flanked by a psychobiological theme and <sup>by</sup> conceptions deriving from the notion of moral career. The framework presented here differs from Czyzewski's account in one minor and one major respect. The minor respect is the attempt to fill out the psychobiological theme, to indicate what it comprises for Goffman and what its significance is for the view of the individual. The major modification proposed here is the replacement of the 'moral career' theme with an account which subsumes this notion under certain wider social determinants of the individual. Czyzewski overlooks the impact on the individual that Goffman argues is made by social organisations and institutionally-provided social roles. Thus, the major part of Goffman's analyses approach the individual as an interactant, as an entity tied to and fashioned out of the rules governing the interaction order. But Goffman also attends to the impingement of intra-individual matters (psychobiological states) on the interactant, as well as influences from the wider social arrangements in the shape of social role obligations and conceptions of human nature implied by organisational membership.

#### 6.6.1 Organisational Bases

The organisation bases of the individual are mainly to be found in Goffman's discussions of problematic participation statuses and relationships and in the paper 'Role distance' (1961b). Particular attention will be given to Asylums for that work contains Goffman's only analysis of a formal organisation,

the mental hospital. 'A chief concern', Goffman states in the book's 'Introduction', 'is to develop a sociological version of the structure of the self' (1961a:xiii). Goffman's use of the singular is apt to mislead, for there are two conceptions of the self that repeatedly surface in Asylums. One is the self embodied in the total institution's definitions of appropriate role behaviour for the inmate; the other is a self which resists these definitions - what might be called a countervailing self. Asylums presents an ethnography of inmate (and especially mental patient) conduct that focuses on face-to-face interaction, but which also acknowledges the pervasive influence of the organisation's definitions of who and what the patient should be. This is evident, for example, in the definition of the mental patient as a person who has undergone mental hospitalisation (1961a:128). This is a 'strictly sociological' definition because it affects the life-chances and 'social fate' of the person.

A dismal picture of that fate is portrayed in the opening essay on the features of total institutions. The key characteristic of the total institution is that it is an organisation which seeks total control over the behaviour of inmates; it is the epitome of organisational tyranny and coerciveness. The most general objective of the organisation is to segregate the inmates from the wider society, and for this reason it is incompatible with that fundamental social unit, the family. The 'batch living' of life in the total institution may properly be contrasted with the 'domestic existence' of family

life. Thus a major task that must be undertaken by the organisation when a new inmate enters is to suppress those features of the inmate's 'home-world'-based 'presenting culture' that are incompatible with its conception of him. But acculturation, assimilation and 'cultural victory' do not loom large among the organisation's objectives. Instead, it tends to use the tension created by differences between home world culture and its own as 'strategic leverage in the management of men' (ibid:13).

All organisations define a person's self in terms of the obligations and expectations attached to the roles they require of him. But the 'encompassing tendencies' of the total institution are such as to take the organisational determination of self to an extreme, since they attempt to exercise control over every significant part of the inmate's life. As Goffman puts it, they are 'the forcing houses for extreme persuasion; each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self' (ibid:12).

A grim portrait is painted of induction into the organisation. Upon entering the inmate is subjected to 'a series of abasements, humiliations, and profanations of self' (ibid:14). Goffman suggests that an understanding of these 'mortification processes' will prove instructive in showing how other types of organisation succeed in preserving their members' 'civilian selves'. It is precisely these civilian selves that come under attack upon entry to the organisation. Often, the inmate is

dispossessed of his civilian roles, and perhaps even his rights as a citizen. He is 'trimmed' and 'programmed' by 'admission procedures': his biography may be recorded, his picture taken, his person searched, his hair cut, his personal belongings removed, his clothing replaced by institutional issue. In these little ways the inmate is obliged to forgo many of his previous sources of self-identification. The neophyte inmate may also find himself subjected to unpleasant and painful treatment. He may become the unwilling participant in 'obedience tests', 'will-breaking contests' and 'initiation rites'. He may be physically mutilated or disfigured or be expected to perform humiliating deferential acts. In addition, the inmate finds that the 'territories of his self' are violated. He loses control over information about his self that he enjoyed in his home world, and is subject to physical and interpersonal contamination. Through the symbolic implications of these 'direct assaults on the self' the inmate is made dramatically aware of the *disparity between his own former conception of self and the version indicated by the organisation.*

There are other, subtler and more insidious forms of mortification of the inmate's self. The usual relationship which obtains between the individual and his acts may be disrupted by 'looping' and 'regimentation' (ibid:35-41). The 'personal economy of action' (ibid:38) enjoyed by persons in their home world is severely curtailed or prohibited.

The sum consequence of mortification processes is to deprive the inmate of those home world-based resources which serve to assure him of his 'adult executive competency' (ibid:43). Mortification processes strip the inmate's self of organisationally irrelevant identities and identity resources. But having been thus stripped, the inmate must be 'rebuilt' and given an organisationally appropriate identity. The official means available to the inmate for this task is the privilege system, which comprises three essential elements: 1) house rules which prescribe and proscribe inmate conduct; 2) privileges the inmate is rewarded with for his obedience; 3) punishments meted out for infractions of house rules. A proper orientation to the privilege system constitutes an acceptable inmate self in the eyes of the staff. However, there are also other sources for the reconstitution of self which are not officially sanctioned or controlled. One such source is the 'fraternalization process' (ibid:56-58) through which socially distant persons in civil society now find themselves locked in a common fate. 'Mutual support and common counter-moves' tend to develop and the inmate receives, as it were, a lesson in the common humanity of his fellows. Another source of reconstitution of self, also frowned on by the staff, is the securing of forbidden satisfactions through various 'secondary adjustments' (ibid:54-55). Thus, the mortified self does not rest denuded in limbo; there are a variety of official and unofficial sources for the refashioning of the inmate's self.



The plasticity of human nature is powerfully in evidence in Goffman's analysis of the inmate's situation. He shows how successful the total institution is in redefining the inmate's self - so successful, in fact, that there tends to be a general absence of high morale and group solidarity among inmates. Individual rather than collective lines of adaptation to the privilege system and mortifying processes are the rule. The most typical adaptation is to 'play it cool', but other lines include 'situational withdrawal', 'intransigence', 'colonization' and 'conversion' (see *ibid*:61-64). Each line represents the inmate's own reconciliation of the tension between his present identity and his home-world based identity.

On the other hand, Goffman emphasises that the stripping and subsequent reorganisation of the inmate's self seldom has a lasting effect after release from the total institution. After the inmate has left, what is significant is the 'proactive status' (*ibid*:72) conferred by his experience. Sometimes the proactive status is looked on favourably in civilian life, as in the case of graduates of officers' training-schools; sometimes it is unfavourable, as the former mental patient may learn to his cost. Thus, total institutions are potent in redefining the nature of the inmate, but the results of this self-redefinitional power soon fades when the inmate leaves.

The total institution is a type of organisation which treats the inmate as its 'raw material', and his exclusion from

civil society and the reorganisation of his self as its 'product'. However, Goffman's close observation of the inmate's situation shows that the organisational determination of self is seldom wholly successful, since the inmate attempts to preserve his self from psychological assault by seeking out unofficial bases of self identification. The basic theme of Asylums - the dialectic between the organisationally-determined self and the countervailing self - is introduced in the first paper and developed with reference to the mental patient in the next two. The inmate is only partly defined in terms of the organisation's expectations. Seen in the full round of his activity, the inmate is also depicted as declining some of these expectations. Asylums is a case study of the implications for self of fulfilling and departing from social obligations.

The analysis of the countervailing and the organisationally-ascribed self is developed, somewhat confusingly in places, in 'The moral career of the mental patient'. Entry to the mental hospital is socially fateful for whosoever enters as a patient, and Goffman's point is that those admitted tend to share similar circumstances and responses, irrespective of their diagnosis. By addressing the common features of the situation of mentally hospitalised persons, by adopting a sociological perspective instead of some sort of 'junior psychiatry' (ibid:xi), Goffman is able to suggest that the patient's 'sick behaviour' 'is not primarily a product of mental illness' but is 'by and large a product of... social distance from the situation that the patient is in' (ibid:130).

Goffman's broad argument is that most patients are unwillingly or unwittingly hospitalised, victims of an 'alienative coalition' (ibid:137) that includes those kin and friends who should protect his interests. Once hospitalised the patient is obliged to come to terms with the ward system and the implications it holds for his new self. Later, he learns to appreciate how self is 'something outside oneself that can be constructed, lost and rebuilt all with great speed and some unanimity', that it is 'not a fortress but a small open city', that the construction and destruction of self is a 'shameless game' (ibid:165).

The paper concludes with a somewhat contradictory analysis of the self. The dominant conception is of a self determined and constituted by organisational demands:

'The self, then, can be seen as something that resides in the arrangements prevailing in a social system for its members. The self in this sense is not a property of the person to whom it is attributed, but dwells rather in the pattern of social control that is exerted in connection with the person himself and those around him. This special kind of institutional arrangement does not so much support the self as constitute it.' (ibid:168)

But there is also a countervailing self that plays 'shameless games', insulting staff or practising the 'marriage moratorium' in the knowledge that these activities will have no significant implications for the self. This countervailing self seems to exist in spite of the self-defining implications of the social arrangements which apply to the mental patient. The

countervailing self is not constituted by social arrangements but apparently emerges as a result of the experiences undergone in the prepatient and inpatient phases. It is the cumulative consequence of the train of experiences suffered by the patient: betrayal by his intimates, mortification of self upon entry to the mental hospital, and the subsequent discrediting of his every attempt to sustain a viable self. The sum consequence is that the patient comes to appreciate how a viable self is built out of social arrangements. He becomes morally loosened or fatigued because he senses the essential arbitrariness of these social arrangements.

Some clarification of what the countervailing self comprises is found in the third paper, 'The underlife of a public institution'. Goffman begins with a broad discussion of the nature of the social bond. Individuals are bonded to social entities by obligations, some of which are 'warm' (attachments), others of which are 'cold' (commitments). To consider someone as a fit subject of any given obligation is to imply something about what sort of person the individual is. But the individual may not meet these obligations to everyone's satisfaction. Goffman writes, 'If every bond implies a broad conception of the person tied by it, we should go on to ask how the individual handles this defining of himself', and it seems that in practice the individual neither completely embraces or rejects his obligations but 'holds himself off from fully embracing all the self-implications of his affiliation, allowing some of his disaffection to be seen even while fulfilling his major

obligations' (ibid:175). Goffman suggests that 'expressed distance' from obligations is a pervasive feature of social life, a central feature of social being. Various 'unofficial social arrangements', collectively described as 'secondary adjustments', are the mental patient's means of expressing distance from the hospital's conception of his self. Secondary adjustments are described as methods of 'getting around the organization's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be' (ibid:189). Goffman concludes that the 'recalcitrance' which secondary adjustments evidence 'is not an incidental mechanism of defense but rather an essential constituent of the self' (ibid:319). The view of the individual as being 'to himself what his place in an organization defines him to be' is compromised whenever close observation of any element of social life is undertaken since 'we always find the individual employing methods to keep some distance, some elbow room, between himself and that with which others assume he should be identified'. And again, 'in all situations actually studied the participant has erected defenses against his social bondedness' (ibid). The countervailing self is so universal a feature of social life that Goffman argues that the individual can be defined,

'... for sociological purposes, as a stance-taking entity, a something that takes up a position somewhere between identification with an organization and opposition to it, and is ready at the slightest pressure to regain its balance by shifting its involvement in either direction. It is thus against something that the self can emerge.' (ibid:320)

The last paragraph of the paper expands this view:

'Without something to belong to, we have no stable self, and yet total commitment and attachment to any social unit implies a kind of selflessness. Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks.' (ibid:320)

Goffman intends the argument to apply both to mental patients and those in 'free society'. However, the two views of the self offered in Asylums are not well integrated: what is the relation of the countervailing self which 'resides in the cracks' to the self determined by meeting the obligations of organisations and other social entities? For a more coherent statement, we must turn to 'Role distance' (1961b).

That cogency derives from the specific point of departure, the concept of social role, and the specific interactional frame of reference which Goffman adopts to criticise traditional sociological conceptions. Traditional notions such as that of Parsons (1951:25) conceive social role as the normatively determined orientations and actions of an actor occupying a given status in a 'patterned interactive relationship'. Traditional role theory Goffman argues, implies that a self awaits the individual taking a role. Conformity with the demands of the role gives the individual a particular 'me': 'in the language of Kenneth Burke, doing is being' (1961b:88). There are two principal difficulties with this account for

Goffman. One is that it assumes that the actor will automatically become attached to the role and the 'me' that goes with it. It neglects 'the many roles that persons play with detachment, shame or resentment' (ibid:90). A second difficulty is the loose frame of reference used in empirical studies of role behaviour. It is not always clear which is the relevant role that will be called upon to explain any given behaviour. Goffman then proposes a 'more atomistic frame of reference' (ibid:95), the 'situated activity system' or encounter which promises to allow 'the complexities of concrete conduct' to be 'examined instead of by-passed'.

In the encounter the individual may take a 'situated role' and its accompanying 'situated self' (ibid:97). The use of the encounter as an analytical frame of reference also enables the 'problem of expression' (ibid:99-105) to be addressed: individuals may not merely enact situated role expectations but may 'play at' rather than 'play' the role; they may 'break role' or 'go out of role' ('brown studies' etc); and they may wish to 'style' the role in their own way. The possibilities the problem of expression opens leads Goffman to propose two kinds of involvement: 'role embracement', where the individual is attached to the role and spontaneously involved in it and 'role distance', those often humorous or skittish behaviours that serve to 'constitute a wedge between the individual and his role, between doing and being'. These forms of '"effectively" expressed pointed separateness' between the individual and his role deny not the role but the self it implies (ibid:108). Goffman

suggests that what the individual does in taking role distance is not an expression of his essential self or uniqueness as a human being; rather, the individual invokes another, situationally-irrelevant source of self-identification, such as the role of 'man' and 'woman' in the case of sexual innuendo between surgeons and nurses during surgery (cf. Appendix F for further consideration of sexual innuendo).

The concept of role distance combats 'the touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology' by providing a sociological account of those items of conduct commonsensically regarded as expressions of the unique personality of the individual. In place of Simmel's valorisation of individuality, Goffman seeks to close down the area it occupies through his sociology of the interaction order generally, and more specifically through the concept of role distance. It is also instructive to compare Goffman's treatment of this issue with that of Dahrendorf (1973). In 'Homo sociologicus' Dahrendorf is disquietened by the disparity between the 'glass men' of sociological role theory and the lively individuals of our everyday experience. How are they to be reconciled? Dahrendorf presents two solutions. The first draws upon Robert Musil's (1952) novel, The Man Without Qualities. Musil postulates a 'tenth character', 'the passive fantasy of unfilled spaces' which permits human beings everything except the need to take seriously our characters as determined by our roles. The second solution derives from Kant who distinguished between the individual as an occupant of the sensible world who was



knowable, empirical, determined and unfree, and the individual as occupant of the intelligible world who was unknowable, transcendental, undetermined and free (Dahrendorf, 1973:56-64). Simmel, of course, also subscribed to this distinction. Both of Dahrendorf's solutions are metaphysical. Goffman, on the other hand, presents a solution to Dahrendorf's dilemma from within the resources of a sociological framework.

The concept of role distance has generated some debate (see Coser, 1966; Stebbins, 1967; Mayntz, 1970) but Goffman's critics fail to address a fundamental feature of his analysis, that individuals play situated or interactional roles that are responsive to the organisation of face-to-face interaction. This brings us to the second main aspect of Goffman's approach to the social construction of the individual, its interactional bases.

#### 6.6.2 Interactional Bases

The preceding section has elaborated some of the ways in which organisations, social roles and other 'social entities' confer consequential definitions of the individual. This is a not always well-appreciated fact about Goffman's work, partly because his own programmatic statements draw attention to his interactional interests (a tendency likely to be intensified by retrospective recategorisation ensuing from the posthumous publication of 'The interaction order'; 1983a). These supra-interactional entities provide consequential definitions of the individual because they affect his life chances - a point that is quite self-evident in Asylums but which is also

explicitly made in 'Role distance' (1961b:92). The interactional bases of the individual are consequential in a different way; the principal risk is that the individual will be discredited and suffer embarrassment.

Before proceeding further, a terminological note is required. We have noted the shifting conceptions of the term self in Asylums. A further inconsistency arises if we compare the notion of self as dwelling in a pattern of social control in the latter work with its definition in 'The insanity of place' where it is the 'portrait of the individual encoded in the actions of the subject itself' (1971:341). As suggested in 6.1 above, Goffman often relies upon commonsense understandings as a holding device in his use of this term. But, more than this, Goffman also appears to draw upon some well-established Chicagoan notions. For Park and Burgess (1969:55) self is the individual's consciousness of himself which is based upon his status in the groups of which he is a member. They maintain, 'we come into the world as individuals. We acquire status, and become persons' (ibid). (Compare Park's (1926:137) earlier formulation: 'We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons'.) Goffman often appears to employ the terms individual, self and person in this way, although he expressly defines persons as a 'portrait of the individual encoded in the actions of others' (1961:341). The actions of others to be considered in this section are those occurring in face-to-face interaction.

Underlying the apparent diversity of Goffman's published work are a set of assumptions about the nature of interaction. To begin with, people usually want to engage in interaction that runs smoothly and is comfortable to all involved. This desired state of interaction contrasts with those states in which participants feel self-conscious, flustered, awkward or embarrassed (1953:243-247; 1961b:44-45). It is this possibility which, in Goffman's famous epigram, makes interaction a 'gamble'. Uncomfortable situations can only be held at bay by people 'working' to maintain the tone of the encounter. In other words, they must possess certain interactional skills and use them appropriately.

Central to the task of establishing and maintaining a satisfactory 'definition of the situation' is the exchange of information about the identities and orientations of actors. When we meet others, we need to know something about their status, knowledgeability, mood, intent and so forth in order to judge what they will expect of us and what we can expect of them. Some of this information is directly available to us from the person's conduct: through expressions given in talk and given off in nonverbal conduct. Such a description is of course an artificial reconstruction of what actually occurs. In our everyday encounters we quickly absorb this information and we make inferences about other people's status, mood, and so on without much conscious thought.

In examining the flow of information in encounters, Goffman repeatedly emphasises our capacity to design and control our interactional activity. This idea of 'impression management' suggests that people present the impression of themselves that they wish others to receive in an attempt to control how those others see them. This emphasis has given rise to the common complaint that Goffman's view of human nature is thoroughly 'Machiavellian' - that he sees people as entirely manipulative, egoistical and cynical beings (Cuzzort, 1969 is one of the earliest formulations of this view; see Bryant, 1978 for another example). Although not without foundation, this interpretation concentrates on only one side of Goffman's thinking about interaction, the informational side. There is another side, centring around Durkheim's notion of ritual, which articulates the various kinds of care and respect (or their opposites: disregard and contempt) that we extend to others. This side presents a very different picture of human nature.

Here Goffman borrows some of Durkheim's ideas about the social character of religious behaviour and proposes that they can shed light on certain aspects of face-to-face interaction. Durkheim's thinking about religious ritual is extended to the interactional sphere. Thus, Goffman argues that it is through a multitude of minor acts - addressing someone as 'Mr' or 'Mrs', fetching a chair for a guest, apologising for late arrival - we show our respect and regard for the feelings of others and the beliefs we hold about the proper treatment of those others. Thus, these minor acts can be seen as 'interaction rituals',

through which we affirm the proper character of our relationship to others. Conversely, if we wish to snub or insult others, we do so through the self-same medium of these interaction rituals. Attention to the ritual dimension of interaction leads Goffman (1955) to propose two very basic social rules. For mutually satisfactory interaction to take place, persons must follow a rule of self-respect (they must conduct themselves in a way that shows some pride, dignity and honour) and a rule of considerateness (they must treat others tactfully).

Ritual considerations may impinge on impression management. Goffman maintains that our self-presentations have a moral character. That is to say, when we present ourselves in a certain way (eg as students), then we have a moral right to expect others (eg teachers) to treat us in that way. Rights and duties are part of how we present ourselves to others and their treatment of us. Thus, Goffman shows that moral obligations are built right into the detail of interaction. Morality is not something that is diffusely located in 'society' but is rather mediated and renewed in everyday social encounters.

The ritual element of interaction is very clearly to the fore in some of Goffman's mid-fifties work ('On face-work'; 'The nature of deference and demeanor'). In a manner reminiscent of Durkheim's 'Individualism and the intellectuals' (1969), Goffman writes:

'... this secular world is not so irreligious as we might think. Many gods have been done away with, but the individual himself stubbornly remains as a deity of considerable importance.' (1956:499)

Attention to the ritual dimension in interaction leads to a contrasting image of human nature to that of the cynical gamesman: individuals are seen as little islands of sacredness. Moreover, attention to the ritual dimension also leads to a general conception of interactional process as involving the tactful collaboration of the parties to the encounter rather than individualist strategising.

The informational and ritual sides of Goffman's sociology represents his attempt to work through the interactional consequences of classic antinomy between egoism and altruism. Moreover the ritual aspect, prominent in the early Goffman, continues to be an abiding concern right up to Forms of Talk where the clearest expression of these two sides of his sociology is found (see 1981a:14-15, 21 on system and ritual constraints). In a series of publications Collins (eq 1980, 1988a, 1988b) has suggested that 'the deepest layer in Goffman's works, his core intellectual vision, is a continuation of the Durkheimian tradition' (1988b:43). It is worth noting that Goffman's earliest formulation of the ritual model is developed in opposition to what he saw as the unduly instrumental emphasis in Weber's and G.H. Mead's account of interaction. Whilst Weber and Mead stressed how individuals 'take others into consideration' in pursuing their actions, Goffman sought to

balance this calculative bias by emphasising how we 'give consideration to other persons' (1953:103).

There are thus two root images of the individual employed by Goffman: the potentially manipulative, egoistic games-player (which reaches its apotheosis in Strategic Interaction) and the little god who is due deference and considerateness. These images derive from the two major constraints on face-to-face interaction, informational and ritual. Informational constraints concern the expression and control of information given and given off. They are ultimately determined by the limits of the physical capacities of the human body and there is thus the possibility of pancultural formulations (the 'system constraints'). Ritual constraints concern the interactional expression and control of one's own feelings and those of others. Whilst standards of respect etc are enormously culturally variable, certain universals of politeness behaviour have been postulated (see Levinson and Brown, 1987).

Within this general framework of interactional constraints Goffman presents a series of distinctions to accommodate what actually transpires in given instances of interaction. The role of interactant is, in a sense, additional to whatever social role the individual must play in an encounter (1967:116, 135). Goffman suggests

'... the individual does not go about merely going about his business. He goes about constrained to sustain a viable image of himself in the eyes of others. Since

local circumstances always will reflect upon him, and since these circumstances will vary unexpectedly and constantly... self work will be continuously necessary.' (1971:185)

For 'self work' to be successful, the co-operation or at least the forbearance of others is required. The self is here seen as a collaborative achievement, accomplished through face-to-face interaction with others.

In 'On face-work' and Presentation the individual as an interactant is seen in dual terms as a social product and an agent. As a social product the self is an 'image' which is 'pieced together' from the expressive implications of the encounter (1967:31) or as a 'performed character', a 'dramatic effect' (1959:252) arising from the interaction. As an agent the self is 'a kind of player in a ritual game' (1967:31) or 'a hurried fabricator of impressions' (1959:253). The self as image or performed character is generated as a product of interaction, whereas the self as player or performer is the active agent who initiates action in an encounter.

In Goffman's later work these anthropomorphic conceptions give way to views of the individual phrased as interactional functions. In Relations in Public Goffman introduces 'two things an individual can be': (1) a 'vehicular unit', that is, 'a shell of some kind controlled by a human pilot or navigator' and a 'participation unit', which is not explicitly defined but which consists of the subset 'single' and 'with' (1971:5-6, 19). In Frame Analysis Goffman identifies four



'functions' of the individual participating in ordinary talk: principal, animator, figure and strategist (1974:517-523). This terminology is further developed under the auspices of 'production format' and 'participation framework' in Forms of Talk (see Appendix F). As Czyzewski (1987:34, table 1) shows, there are continuities between the early notions of self as social product and participation framework, and self as agent and production format.

The analysis of the individual simply as an interactional functionary bereft of a 'substantial self' (Weigert, 1975) is a major cause of concern for Goffman's more philosophically-inclined critics. MacIntyre concludes that Goffman has 'liquidated the self into its role-playing' (1981:30) and advocates an older conception of the self in which Aristotelian 'virtues' are central. Others, such as Miller (1984, 1986) find Goffman's sociological view of the self as extreme. Goffman appears to regard the individual personality as an illusion, a mere interactional effect. Goffman's view denies genuine agency to the individual and fails to address the persistence and continuity of the self through time. A 'constant self' (Psathas & Waksler, 1973) or 'firm self' (Psathas, 1977:86) is conspicuous by its absence. Others, notably Gonos (1977, 1980) regard Goffman's 'decentering' of the self a considerable and praiseworthy achievement, evidence of the genuinely scientific status (in a structuralist sense) of his work.

It is worth noting that these criticisms are distinct from the complaint that Goffman's actor is a Machiavellian manipulator, for they have a common source in the perceived need to provide sociological analysis with a more substantive view of the human agent as social being. They contribute to the debate about what might be called 'philosophical anthropology' (cf. Honneth and Joas, 1988). Goffman was not interested in these issues. However, the criticisms serve to underline the thoroughly sociological thrust of Goffman's approach to the self. In all his writings Goffman is attempting to 'deconstruct' the self in social terms and is constantly trying to push a consistently sociological perspective on the self to its limits. In this respect it is not surprising that he can be read as criticising commonsense and old liberal conceptions of the individual. The self is not a substance, 'not an entity half-concealed behind events, but a changeable formula for managing oneself during them' (1974:573). Yet despite the consistently sociological thrust of Goffman's deconstruction, he does not quite accomplish the structuralist ideal of a complete deletion or decentring of the self. It is true that Frame Analysis and Forms of Talk herald an unprecedented atomization of the self into ephemeral stances governed by the frame or footing of the interaction. In so doing Goffman shows that the area occupied by the Meadian 'me' is considerably more extensive than might have been thought, but in most of his writings, there is an 'I' to be detected. To examine this further, the psychobiological bases of the individual must be considered.

### 6.6.3 Psychobiological Bases

Since face-to-face interaction involves the physical presence of human beings, Goffman recognises that there will be 'an inevitable psychobiological element' in whatever transpires and this may involve 'emotion, mood, cognition, bodily orientation and muscular effort' (1983a:3). This section poses the question, what is the significance of the psychobiological element in Goffman's analysis of the individual?

In Mead's famous distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' (1934:173-178 esp.) the 'I' is the spontaneous and unselfconscious aspect of the self which is rooted in the psychological and biological impulses of the individual. The 'me' in contrast is a distillation of the responses and attitudes of others to the 'I' and is thoroughly social in nature. Goffman's dimorphic conception of self as agent (self as player or performer) and social product (self as image or performed character) appears to reproduce Mead's distinction.

However, Goffman is unwilling to grant the psychobiological dimension a free-standing or independent status. The performer is 'a harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance' (1959:252). The capacities ascribed to this performer include social learning, dreaming, anxiety in anticipation of a performance, gregariousness, tact and shame. But Goffman goes on to suggest:

'These attributes of the individual qua performer are not merely the depicted effect of particular performances; they are psychobiological in nature, and yet they seem to arise out of intimate interaction with the contingencies of staging performances.' (ibid:253-254)

Earlier in Presentation he observes:

'The expressive coherence that is required in performances points out a crucial discrepancy between our all-too-human selves and our socialized selves. As human beings we are presumably creatures of variable impulse with moods and energies which change from one moment to the next. As characters put on for an audience, however, we must not be subject to ups and downs... Through social discipline ... a mask of manner can be held in place from within.' (ibid:56-57)

Goffman appears to posit as part of our 'all-too-human selves' something a little more substantial than the evanescent Meadian 'I', something more closely akin to Cooley's conception of the 'looking-glass self'. (It is interesting to note that Cooley is referenced on four occasions in Presentation; Mead does not merit a single mention.) Whilst Goffman does not go quite so far as to suggest that the imaginations we have of one another are the 'solid facts of society' (Cooley, 1909; Jandy, 1942), he does place great store by the imaginative life of the individual, as befits an author whose earliest work dealt with the projection of fantasy. For example:

'... it is known, although perhaps not sufficiently appreciated, that the individual spends a considerable amount of time bathing his wounds in fantasy, imagining the worst things that might befall him, daydreaming about matters sexual, monetary, and so forth. He also rehearses what he will say when the time comes... We

are the vehicles of society; but we are also overheated engines prone to keep firing even though the ignition is turned off.' (1974:551-552)

Fantasies, daydreams, variable moods and energies and the like must be disciplined and channelled for euphoric interaction to take place.

A leading concern of Goffman's sociology is the nature of involvement (see, eg, 1953:247-257; 1967:113-136; 1963a:33-79). Especially in conversational interaction the individual must mobilise his psychobiological resources to sustain some cognitive and affective engrossment in the activity. Spontaneous involvement is the desired state for conversational interaction. As ever in Goffman, the features of involvement are best observed in the breach, in 'aways' and other external preoccupations (1963a:69-75) and 'self-', 'interaction-', and 'other-consciousness' (1967:118-125), in 'frame breaks' and 'negative experiences' (1974:345-438). Spontaneous involvement is a fragile thing which can be broken by overly-tactful conduct leading to boredom on the one hand, and by various forms of 'flooding out' (laughter, anger, embarrassment) on the other.

In Goffman's sociology, embarrassment is the cardinal emotion (cf. Schudson, 1984). It surfaces when an interactant projects a self that is then threatened or discredited by the expressive facts which come to light in the encounter (1967:107-108). Embarrassment is thus conceptualised as a 'formal property' of interaction which disrupts the 'kind of

comfort' felt during encounters 'which has to do with the coherence and decisiveness with which the individual assumes a well-integrated role and pursued momentary objectives having nothing to do with the content of the actions themselves' (1967:101). Goffman's focus is on the interactional consequences of the emotion of embarrassment for the individual as an interactant rather than the personal consequences of the embarrassing act of the individual (cf. Babcock, 1988; Hochschild, 1983).

Goffman's treatment of embarrassment is typical of his treatment of emotion more generally, for he is consistently more interested in the consequences of its interactional manifestations than its function as a sign of the individual's inward states. Thus in 'On face-work' he argues that 'spontaneously expressed feelings are likely to fit into the formal pattern of the ritual interchange more elegantly than consciously designed ones' (1967:23). Response cries are not expressions of unsocialised feelings but have a display function (1981a:78-123). Genderisms display not the essential biological natures of men and women but the culturally conventional assumptions about how those natures are to become evident in social situations (1979:3-8). Any doctrine of natural expression is quite alien to Goffman.

Yet for all his persistently social accountings aimed at combatting the touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology, Goffman recognises an element of

indeterminacy in social life which emanates from the psychobiology of the individual. Faulty persons, the stigmatised, mental patients and all those others who refuse to keep the social place assigned them are realising their individual purposes and desires, their all-too-human selves. Like Simmel, Goffman consigns these matters to the 'contents' category beyond sociological analysis; the particularities of individual purposes and desires are, in some respects, beyond scientific modes of analysis. Simmel's comment that 'all human being and doing... flows from enigmatic forces' (1950:333) finds an echo in Goffman's observation that 'after a speech, the speaker and audience rightfully return to the flickering, cross-purposed, messy irresolution of their unknowable circumstances' (1981a:195).

#### 6.7 Formal Sociology and the Individual

There are further affinities and convergences between Simmel and Goffman's views of the individual which can be briefly mentioned. Simmel's notion that 'character always means that persons or things are definitely committed to an individual mode of existence as distinct from and excluding any other' (1978:432; cf *ibid*:232 on weak character) is convergent with Goffman's conception in 'Where the action is'. There is a nascent version of role distance present in Simmel's observation that members of secret orders often act simply as functionaries whose 'personal outlines' disappear behind the discharge of a 'predetermined role' (1950:373). In arguing for the reciprocal nature of

gratitude, Simmel comments that 'man is not the merchant of himself... his qualities, the powers and functions which emanate from him, do not simply lie before him like merchandise on a counter' (1950:391). This is, in a curious way, quite consistent with Goffman's 'as performers, we are merchants of morality' (1959:251) if the collaborative aspect of the production of performances is emphasised.

At the outset of this chapter it was argued that whilst Simmel sought to preserve the spirit from complete socialisation, Goffman contrariwise attempted to press the social determination of the individual as far as he could. Yet both authors arrive at a remarkably similar position. Both uncover a range of hitherto unenvisioned social determinations of the individual and his action, deriving from the money economy and the forms of sociation, and the interaction order respectively. In Goffman's case there is a much greater reluctance to admit non-social sources of the individual into account. This can be seen most clearly in his attempt to dissolve the 'perduring self' into a series of interactional functions (1961b and 1974:293-300) and his argument that expressions of personal identity are determined by frame-relevant relationships (1974:573-574). Nevertheless, for Goffman the psychobiological dimension introduces a source of unpredictability into interaction. Thus, despite apparent differences in their points of departure, their analyses of the individual arrive at a common terminus. This arises from their shared adherence to a formal sociology which is necessarily selective in its analytical standpoints and which sets the



contents of particular individuals' purposes and desires outside the remit of sociology. In so doing both Simmel and Goffman leave space for the Kantian presupposition of a free, undetermined but unknowable self. But the knowable self is shown to be a much more social creature than Kant ever envisaged.

## CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSION

7.1 Possibilism

Unlike most major sociologists, neither Simmel nor Goffman were much concerned with the social role of the sociologist and the issue of the wider impact of sociological knowledge on society. For critics of a Marxian or 'radical' persuasion, this comprises a major flaw in their sociologies. Lukacs, a student of Simmel's, looked to Marx to remedy the ahistorical and pessimistic elements of his teacher's thought (see Arato and Breines, 1979), whilst Gouldner and his followers (Gouldner, 1971; Bandyopadhyay, 1971; Young, 1971) have insisted that the 'conservative' character of Goffman's sociology requires supplementing with an analysis of history and social structure if its liberatory potential is to be realised. Under the rubric 'possibilism' I want to consider one aspect of the formal sociologies of Simmel and Goffman which addresses these issues.

The neglect of history and social structure is more an apparent than real criticism of their sociologies. As was argued in chapter 4, both Simmel and Goffman entertain strong reservations about conventional accounts of social structure when specifying their analytical interests in the forms of sociation and the interaction order. Simmel's earliest version of 'The problem of sociology' (1895) distinguished between historical and analytical approaches to the form of sociation; Simmel's

preference was for the latter, but the historical approach was considered valid and legitimate. Goffman (1983c) explains his own disinterest in historical analysis as a consequence of the influence of Radcliffe-Brown on post-war Chicagoan sociology: Radcliffe-Brown urged social scientists to examine the functions, not the history, of the social practices they investigated. Goffman recognises the validity of consideration of the historical dimension, and welcomes the growing interest among historians in the lives of ordinary people.

Formal sociology endeavours to explicate the necessary, always applicable aspects of social forms. But this does not preclude the emergence of new forms. Scaff (1988:24) suggests that 'Simmel wanted to know the world in its infinitude, as it just might possibly become'. The prospect of an ever-deepening tragedy of culture represents the pessimistic side of Simmel's thinking about the future, as does his misgivings about socialism. But there is a more optimistic side which considers the possibilities of alternative forms of social life. Simmel (1978:242) proposes that there are two aspects to the notion of possibility which are not always sufficiently distinguished: an existing set of skills and energies and the realisation of these capacities under conditions which cannot be fully predicted. He further argues that many potentialities lie dormant within individuals since life only allows a limited set of them to be realised (ibid:154). For Simmel, then, the unpredictability of the future and the dynamic potentialities of the individual

afford the prospect of an ever more differentiated human social life.

Simmel's possibilistic concerns are most clearly evident in his remarks on super- and subordination and in the essays on women. In his discussion of authority relations Simmel recognises their frequent organisational necessity but goes on to consider some ways in which the degradation associated with super- and subordination can be avoided. He considers measures such as the separation of person and position (1950:283-284; 1978:336-337) and reciprocal and alternating assignation of superordinate and subordinate statuses (1950:286-291; 1955:154). The same possibilistic concerns animate his writings on women (cf. 3.6 above) which consider the changes which may be achieved in the relations between men and women and the prospect of a 'female culture' (Simmel, 1984). He was once reported to have remarked, 'there are not enough categories, just as there are not enough sexes' (in Gassen and Landmann, 1958:174).

Goffman's possibilism is a little more guarded. On the one hand there is a conservatism that is deeply embedded in Goffman's sociology in its Durkheimian insistence upon the role of rules in moral regulation and in the formalist attempt to uncover the universal properties of interactional practices. Goffman certainly did not subscribe to any shallow view of social reconstruction which saw social change as potentially beginning in the very next encounter (as does Harré, 1979). Nor was he optimistic about reform of the treatment of the mentally ill (see 1961a:384). On the other hand the social constructionism

vividly evident in his work on gender suggests that wide-reaching changes in the arrangements between the sexes are possible. In 'The insanity of place' he maintains 'we can all agree that everything should be done to patch up bodies and keep them alive, but certainly not that social organizations of all kinds should be preserved' (1971:387). And despite the Durkheimian insistence on rules, there are often very good grounds for breaking them. 'Even a loosely defined social gathering is still a tight little room', he writes, but 'there are more doors leading out of it and more psychologically normal reasons for stepping through them than are dreamt of by those who are always loyal to situational society' (1963a:241).

These possibilistic concerns represent one respect in which the sociologies of Simmel and Goffman connect with the issue of the relation of sociological knowledge to society. Although not a prominent aspect of their sociologies, they do indicate that both authors were not simply engaged in sociology for sociology's sake. A knowledge of what is necessary in social life can permit a realistic appraisal of what is possible.

## 7.2 Reading Goffman Through Simmel

This thesis has attempted to provide grounds for a Simmelian reading of Goffman. This is scarcely an original interpretation; that Goffman represents a contemporary Simmel is a commonplace in the secondary literature. However, what the thesis has tried to do is to work through the commonplace in detail and to see what it might amount to, and to my knowledge

this has not been tried before. Moreover, the comparison of the two sociologies has drawn upon the work of many commentators on Simmel and Goffman; as Simmel once observed, 'most products of our intellectual creation contain a certain quota which was not produced by ourselves' (1968:41).

Nor is any claim made to have provided an exhaustive and definitive Simmelian reading of Goffman. The thesis identifies some salient points of comparison between the two sociologies and at the same time demonstrates that there is not always a straightforward fit between them. Part of the rationale for the first two chapters, which reconstruct the anatomy of their sociologies, was to guard against the discovery of specious similarities based upon a partial and selective rendering of their ideas. The third chapter's examination of selected substantive topics demonstrated some genuine affinities between Simmel's and Goffman's treatments of personal knowledge, dramaturgy, action and gender as well as the differing scopes of their analyses. Goffman's narrower focus on the interaction order and the social organisation of experience apprehended in frame analytical terms stands in contrast to the wider scope and more discursive approach of Simmel's analyses of the forms of sociation. Perhaps the strongest case which can be made for a Simmelian reading of Goffman rests upon the methodological and procedural similarities and associated assumptions about the nature of social life which were identified in chapters 4 and 5. On the basis of the arguments presented in those chapters it can be concluded that Goffman's sociology comprises a fuller

realisation of Simmel's formal approach that the latter was able to achieve, and it does so in a manner more in keeping with the spirit informing Simmel's enterprise than certain of his avowed followers, notably von Wiese. Chapter 6 compared and contrasted their views on the individual. Animated by opposing impulses - the one attempting to resist the socialisation of the spirit, the other endeavouring to press that socialisation to its limit - both authors nevertheless converge in uncovering a range of ways in which the 'fingers of society' reach into the details of the individual's thought and action. In both Simmel and Goffman the individual emerges as a thoroughly social but not 'oversocialized' (Wrong, 1961) creature. Whilst there is a historical dimension to Simmel's account of the social determinations of the individual, Goffman's analysis is more closely circumscribed to the interactional domain.

From the outset it was recognised that certain risks inhered in the attempt at a long-range intellectual genealogy such as is attempted in qualified terms by this thesis. These risks are compounded by the peculiar nature of Simmel's work summed up by his 'cash legacy' observation. Nevertheless, the thesis has attempted to demonstrate the value of a detailed comparison of the two sociologies. Unlike Levine's (1957; 1980) comparison of the very different sociologies of Simmel and Parsons which largely reveals broad perspectival differences, the comparison of the two more closely akin enterprises considered here can shed some light on the difficult notions of progress and development in sociology. Goffman is in no sense a mere epigone

of Simmel. His analyses have greater conceptual rigour and are more consistently sociological and less broken by psychological microscopy than Simmel's. Goffman's concepts and frameworks are more amenable to empirical application by researchers. In this modest sense it may be possible to speak of 'advance' in sociology. Thus, whilst the primary objective of the thesis has been to use Simmel to frame Goffman, the comparison also helps us to situate Simmel. In this respect it is hoped that the thesis has served to put some flesh on Kurt Wolff's apothegm (quoted in Laurence, 1975:30), 'Georg Simmel needs us as we need him'.



APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY: INVESTIGATIONS OF THE FORMS OF SOCIATION  
 (First edition, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1908, 782pp; second edition,  
 Munich & Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1922, 578pp; sixth edition, Berlin:  
 Duncker & Humblot, 1983, 578pp.)

I	THE PROBLEM OF SOCIOLOGY Das Problem der Soziologie Excursus on the Problem: How is Society Possible? Exkurs über das Problem: wie ist Gesellschaft Möglich?	1959:310-336 1983:1-20 1959:337-56 1983:21-30
II	THE QUANTITATIVE DETERMINATION OF THE GROUP Die quantitative Bestimmtheit der Gruppe	1950:87-177 1983:32-100
III	SUPER- AND SUBORDINATION Über- und Unterordnung Excursus on Outvoting Exkurs über die Überstimmung	1950:179-303 1983:101-185 1950:239-249 1983:142-147
IV	CONFLICT Der Streit	1955:11-123 1983:186-255
V	THE SECRET AND THE SECRET SOCIETY Das Geheimnis und die geheime Gesellschaft Excursus on Adornment Exkurs über den Schmuck Excursus on Written Communication Exkurs über den schriftlichen Verkehr	1950:305-376 1983:257-304 1950:338-344 1983:278-281 1950:352-355 1983:287-288
VI	THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL CIRCLES Die Kreuzung sozialer Kreise	1955:125-195 1983:305-344
VII	THE POOR Der Arme Excursus on the Negativity of Collective Modes of Behaviour Exkurs über die Negativität Kollektiver Verhaltensweisen	1965:118-148 1983:345-379  1950:396-401 1983:359-362
VIII	THE SELF-PRESERVATION OF THE SOCIAL GROUP  Die Selbsterhaltung der sozialen Gruppe Excursus on Hereditary Office Exkurs über das Erbannt Excursus on Social Psychology Excursus über Sozialpsychologie Excursus on Faithfulness & Gratitude Exkurs über Treue und Dankbarkeit	[1898:662-698; 829-836;35-50] 1983:375-459  1983:391-396  1983:421-425 1950:379-395 1983:438-447

- IX      SPACE AND THE SPATIAL ORDERING OF SOCIETY  
 Der Raum und die räumlichen Ordnungen der Gesellschaft      1983:460-526  
 Excursus on the Social Boundary  
 Exkursus über die soziale Begrenzung      1983:467-470  
 Excursus on the Sociology of the Senses      [1969:356-361]  
 Exkursus über die Soziologie der Sinne      1983:483-493  
 Excursus on the Stranger      1950:402-408  
 Exkursus über den Fremden      1983:509-512
- X      THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE GROUP AND THE  
 DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALITY      [1971: 251-293]  
 Die Erweiterung der Gruppe und die Ausbildung  
 der Individualität      1983:527-573  
 Excursus on the Nobility      1971:199-213  
 Exkursus über den Adel      1983:545-552  
 Excursus on the Analogy of Individual -  
 Psychological and Sociological Conditions  
 Exkursus über die Analogie der individualpsychologischen  
 und der soziologischen Verhältnisse      1983:565-568
- The Categories of Human Experience      1971:36-40  
 1908:771-775

Note: [    ] = partial translation

## APPENDIX B

A CITATION COUNT AND INVENTORY OF REFERENCES TO SIMMEL IN  
GOFFMAN'S WRITINGSI. Citation Count

'Symbols' 1951: 1

Communication Conduct: 7

'On face work' 1955: 1

'Deference and demeanor' 1956: 2

Presentation 1959: 2

Encounters 1961: 2

Behavior 1963: 2

'Where the action is' 1967: 1

Relations in Public 1971: 2

Frame Analysis 1974: 1

Total = 21

II. An Inventory of References to Simmel in Goffman's Writings1. Symbols of Class Status, 1951, 294n4:

Status symbols visibly divide the social world into categories of persons, thereby helping to maintain solidarity within a category and hostility between different categories. (4)

- (4) See G. Simmel, 'Fashion', International Quarterly, vol X, pp 130-55.

2. Communication Conduct in an Island Community : *frontispiece*

'...there exists an immeasurable number of less conspicuous forms of relationship and kinds of interaction. Taken singly, they may appear negligible. But since in actuality they are inserted into the comprehensive and, as it were, official social formations, they alone produce society as we know it. To confine ourselves to the large social formations resembles the older science of anatomy with its limitation to the major, definitely circumscribed organs such as heart, liver, lungs, and stomach, and with its neglect of the innumerable, popularly named or unknown tissues. Yet without these, the more obvious organs could never constitute a living organism. On the basis of the major social formations - the traditional subject matter of social science - it would be similarly impossible to piece together the real life of society as we encounter it in our experience. Without the interspersed effects of countless minor syntheses, society would break up into a multitude of discontinuous systems. Sociation continuously emerges and ceases and emerges again. Even where its eternal flux and pulsation are not sufficiently strong to form organisations proper, they link individuals together. That people look at one another and are jealous of one another; that they exchange letters or dine together; that irrespective of all tangible interests they strike one another as pleasant or unpleasant; that gratitude for altruistic acts makes for inseparable union; that one asks another man after a certain street, and that people dress and adorn themselves for one another - the whole gamut of relations that play from one person to another and that may be momentary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, ephemeral or of grave consequence (and from which these illustrations are quite casually chosen), all these incessantly tie men together. Here are the interactions among the atoms of society. They account for all the toughness and elasticity, all the colour and consistency of social life, that is so striking and yet so mysterious.'<sup>(1)</sup>

- (1) Georg Simmel in Kurt H. Wolff, The Sociology of Georg Simmel (New York: The Free Press, 1950), pp.9-10

3. 1953, 81:

Thus, if the term communication be employed broadly to cover the process by which a recipient acquires both streams of signs (receiving one, taking the other), then we see that communication is usually asymmetrical; the sender is involved in one stream of signs, the recipients in two. As Simmel suggests:

'...all of human intercourse rests on the fact that everybody knows something more about the other than the other voluntarily reveals to him...' (1)

(1) Simmel, *op cit*, p.323

4. 1953, 128 n.1:

Events which may be classified as social occasions themselves vary in certain ways. Some of these dimensions will be suggested here.

1. Social occasions vary according to the degree to which participants recognise that the goal or object of the occasion is realised within the occasion itself. (1)

(1) Simmel, of course, makes this point op cit, p.45, where in comparing sociability to play he says:

In as much as in the purity of its manifestations, sociability has no objective purpose, no content, no extrinsic results, it entirely depends on the personalities among whom it occurs. Its aim is nothing but the success of the sociable moment and, at most,

memory of it. Hence the conditions and results of the process of sociability are exclusively the persons who find themselves at a social gathering. Its character is determined by such personal qualities as amiability, refinement, cordiality, and many other sources of attraction.

In his lectures, Professor Shils has made the same point in reference to primary groups.

5. 1953, 143:

The meaning and significance of interruption will, of course, vary. In formally organized interplays explicit and specific sanctions may exist for curbing interruptions. In court trials, for example, we have contempt of court actions. Simmel has referred to the practice in some medieval guilds of imposing a fine upon those who interrupted an alderman in his speech. (1)

(1) Simmel, op cit, ftn, p.349

6. 1953, 275nl:

1. It would seem that the only sizeable literature on poise is to be found in books on etiquette and manners. On the whole, this material has been scorned by social scientists, presumably because the significant observation on the moral norms of interplay contained therein are indiscriminately mixed in both, with personal exhortations as to how individuals ought to behave and with optimistic claims as to how leaders of circles now extinct (or becoming

so) actually conduct themselves. In scorning these works we have also, of course, scorned to study many fundamental aspects of interaction.

Unfortunately some students have similarly by-passed Simmel's treatment of 'sociability' because of the courtly bias in some of the standards he describes.

7. 1953, 300-301:

... others will feel that he has projected into the situation an assumption as to how he ought to be treated and hence, by implication, a conception of himself. If this projection did not occur - if this initial social identification did not take place - then the participants could not begin to act in an orderly way to one another. As Simmel suggests, 'The first condition of having to deal with somebody at all is to know with whom one has to deal'. (1)

(1) Simmel, op cit p.307

8. 1953, 331:

In the case of strangers from off the island, whose past life could not be thoroughly known, care had to be taken to stay off topics that while not known to be embarrassing could be embarrassing. Thus, the islanders were sufficiently tactful towards strangers not to inquire into matters such as religion but to stay off the topic and wait for information to be volunteered, thereby illustrating



Simmel's dictum that discretion '... consists by no means only in the respect for the secret of the other, for his specific will to conceal this or that from us, but in staying away from the knowledge of all that the other does not expressly reveal to us.' (1)

(1) Simmel, op cit pp.320-321

A functional implication of this kind of tact is, of course, that the strangers voluntarily provide information to others of the kind they will require in handling them.

9. On face-work 1955, 218n10; 1967, 16n10:

Certain protective manoeuvres are as common as these defensive ones. The person shows respect and politeness, making sure to extend to others any ceremonial treatment which might be their due. He employs discretion; he leaves unstated facts which might implicitly or explicitly contradict and embarrass the positive claims made by others.

(10)

(10) When the person knows the others well, he will know what issues ought not to be raised and what situations the others ought not to be placed in, and he will be free to introduce matters at will in other areas. When the others are strangers to him, he will often reverse the formula, restricting himself to specific areas he knows are safe. On these occasions, as Simmel suggests, '...discretion consists by no means only in the respect for the secret of the other, for his specific will to conceal this or that from us, but in staying away from the knowledge of all that the other does not expressly reveal to us.' See The Sociology of Georg Simmel (Kurt H. Wolff, tr. and ed.); Glencoe, Ill, Free Press, 1950; pp.320-321

10. Deference and demeanour 1956, 481; 1967, 62-63

Avoidance rituals, as a term, may be employed to refer to those forms of deference which lead the actor to keep at a distance from the recipient and not violate what Simmel (1950:321) has called the 'ideal sphere' that lies around the recipient:

Although differing in size in various directions and differing according to the person with whom one entertains relations, this sphere cannot be penetrated, unless the personality value of the individual is thereby destroyed. A sphere of this sort is placed around man by his honor. Language poignantly designates an insult to one's honor as 'coming too close', the radius of this sphere marks, as it were, the distance whose trespassing by another person insults one's honor.

11. 1956, 482-483; 1967, 65-66:

In our society, rules regarding the keeping of one's distance are multitudinous and strong. They tend to focus around certain matters, such as physical places and properties defined as the recipient's 'own', the body's sexual equipment, etc. An important focus of deferential avoidance consists in the verbal care that actors are obliged to exercise so as not to bring into discussion matters that might be painful, embarrassing, or humiliating to the recipient. In Simmel's words (1950:322):

The same sort of circle which surrounds man - although it is value-accentuated in a very different sense - is filled out by his affairs and by his characteristics. To penetrate this circle by taking notice, constitutes a violation of his personality. Just as material

property is, so to speak, an extension of the ego, and any interference with our property is, for this reason, felt to be a violation of the person, there also is an intellectual private-property, whose violation effects a lesion of the ego in its very center. Discretion is nothing but the feeling that there exists a right in regard to the sphere of the immediate life contents. Discretion, of course, differs in its extension with different personalities just as the positions of honour and of property have different radii with respect to 'close' individuals, and to strangers, and indifferent persons.

12. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, 1959, xii:

The justification for this approach (as I take to be the justification for Simmel's also) is that the illustrations together fit into a coherent framework that ties together bits of experience the reader has already had and provides the student with a guide worth testing in case-studies of institutional social life.

13. 1959, 69n3:

Of course, in the matter of keeping social distance, the audience itself will often co-operate by acting in a respectful fashion, in awed regard for the sacred integrity imputed to the performer. As Simmel suggests:

To act upon the second of these decisions corresponds to the feeling (which also operates elsewhere) that an ideal sphere lives around every human being. Although differing in size in various directions and differing according to the person with whom one entertains relations, this sphere cannot be penetrated, unless the personality value of the individual is thereby destroyed. A sphere of this sort is placed around man by his 'honor'. Language very poignantly designates an insult to one's honor as 'coming too close': the radius

of this sphere marks, as it were, the distance whose trespassing by another person insults one's honor. (3)

- (3) The Sociology of Georg Simmel, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, III: The Free Press, 1950), p.321

14. Fun in Games, 1961, 21-22:

Just as properties of the material context are held at bay and not allowed to penetrate the mutual activity of an encounter, so also certain properties of the participants will be treated as if they were not present. For this let us move from games to social parties. Simmel's famous description of the encounters of 'pure sociability' provides examples:

The fact is that whatever the participants in the gathering may possess in terms of objective attributes - attributes that are centred outside the particular gathering in question - must not enter it. Wealth, social position, erudition, fame, exceptional capabilities and merits, may not play any part in sociability. At most they may perform the role of mere nuances of that immaterial character with which reality alone, in general, is allowed to enter the social work of art called sociability. (7)

Sociability is the game in which one 'does as if' all were equal, and at the same time, as if one honored each of them in particular. (8)

This reduction of the personal character which homogenous interaction with others imposes on the individuals may even make him lean over backward, if we may say so: a characteristically sociable behavior trait is the courtesy with which the strong and extraordinary individual not only makes himself the equal of the weaker, but even acts as if the weaker were the more valuable and superior. (9)

Simmel's embarrassing effort to treat sociability as a type of 'mere' play, sharply cut off from the entanglements of serious life, may be partly responsible for sociologists having failed to identify the rules of irrelevance in sociability with similar rules in serious areas of life. A good example of these rules in the latter areas is found in the impersonal calculable aspects of Western bureaucratic administration. Here, Weber supplies an obvious text, providing only that, as in the case of Simmel, we accept as a tendency what is stated as a fact.

(7) Georg Simmel, The Sociology of Georg Simmel, trans. K.H. Wolff (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950), pp.45-6.

(8) *ibid*, p.49

(9) *ibid*, pp.48-49

15. 1961, 23:

Just as we find that certain social attributes are excluded from significance in wide ranges of encounters, so also we find that participants will hold in check certain psychological states and attitudes, for, after all, the very general rule that one enters into the prevailing mood in the encounter <sup>carries</sup> the understanding that contradictory feelings will be held in abeyance. Simmel states this theme in his discussion of the management of affect during social parties:

It is tactless, because it militates against interaction which monopolizes sociability, to display merely personal moods of depression, excitement, despondency - in brief, the light and the darkness of one's most intimate life. (13)

(13) Simmel, op cit, p.46

16. Behavior in Public Places, 1963, 24n12:

The rules pertaining to this area of conduct I shall call situational proprieties. The code derived therefrom is to be distinguished from other moral codes regulating other aspects of life (even if these sometimes apply at the same time as the situational code): for example, codes of honor, regulating relationships; codes of law, regulating economic and political matters; and codes of ethics, regulating professional life. (12)

(12) See the interesting comments by G. Simmel, 'Morality, Honor and Law' from his Soziologie (3rd ed, Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1923), pp.403-405, trans. E.C. Hughes (mimeographed, University of Chicago).

17. 1963, 92-93:

Eye-to-eye looks, then, play a special role in the communication life of the community, ritually establishing an avowed openness to verbal statements and a rightly heightened mutual relevance of acts. In Simmel's words:

Of the special sense-organs, the eye has a uniquely sociological function. The union and interaction of individuals is based upon mutual glances. This is perhaps the most direct and purest reciprocity which exists anywhere. This highest psychic reaction, however, in which the glances of eye to eye unite men, crystallizes into no objective structure; the unity which momentarily arises between two persons is present in the occasion and is dissolved in the function. So tenacious and subtle is this union that it can only be maintained by the shortest and straightest line between the eyes, and the smallest deviation from it, the slightest glance aside, completely destroys the unique character of this union. No objective trace of this relationship is left behind, as is universally found, directly or indirectly, in all other types of associations between men, as, for example, in interchange of words. The interaction of eye and eye dies in the moment in which directness of the function is lost. But the totality of social relations of human beings, their self-assertion and self-abnegation, their intimacies and estrangements would be changed in unpredictable ways if there occurred no glance of eye to eye. This mutual glance between persons, in distinction from the simple sight or observations of the other, signifies a wholly new and unique union between them. (20)

(20) From his Soziologie, cited in R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess, Introduction to the Science of Sociology (2nd edn., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1924), p.358.

18. 'Where the Action Is', 1967, 162n18:

(18) There is also - largely in fantasy - time away from ordinary life that Georg Simmel calls 'The Adventure'.

19. Relations in Public, 1971 36n12:

This decision rule [first come, first served] creates a dominance ranking but a paradoxical one, since all other forms of preference are thereby excluded. (12)

(12) It might be said - with apologies to Simmel - that it is the essential character of everyday turn-taking to be a middle ground, the claims of property and contract being held in check at one end, the claims of social rank at the other. To take one's turn is neither to take one's property nor to take one's social place. Utilitarian goods are involved, but typically ones so minor that it would have been easy to put their allocation into the service of ceremonial expression. Whereas ceremonial expression provides bodily expression of social position when things go right, turns in daily life do so only when things go wrong.

20. 1971, 97n3:

It might be added that a norm often is assumed to be but one part, an integral one of a code or system of norms. (3)

(3) Simmel makes the interesting suggestion that terms such as 'ethics' and 'honour' refer to informal codes sustained by individuals acting in special sub-worlds - business, profession, politics - wherein only part of the self becomes subject to judgement, whereas the notion of morals and morality pertains to an informal code involving judgements that cannot be segregated. (Georg Simmel, 'Morality, Honour and Law', being a section of his Soziologie translated for mimeographing by Everett C Hughes)

21. Frame Analysis, 1974, 249n1:

(They must enter also with a desire to play and willingness to play each other, but these psychological prerequisites do not much differentiate between chess and checkers.) It



should be repeated: a similar argument can be advanced in regard to any self-absorbing, fanciful activity. (1) A cup can be filled from any realm, but the handle belongs to the realm that qualifies as reality.

- (1) Simmel presents the case for works of art in 'The Handle' in Georg Simmel et al., Essays on Sociology, Philosophy and Aesthetics, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

Modern theories of art strongly emphasize that the essential task of painting and sculpture is the depiction of the spatial organization of things. Assenting readily to this, one may then easily fail to recognize that space within a painting is a structure altogether different from the real space we experience. Within actual space an object can be touched, whereas in a painting it can only be looked at; each portion of real space is experienced as part of an infinite expanse, but the space of a picture is experienced as a self-enclosed world; the real object interacts with everything that surges past or hovers around it, but the content of a work of art cuts off these threads, fusing only its own elements into a self-sufficient unity. Hence, the work of art leads its life beyond reality. To be sure, the work of art draws its content from reality; but from visions of reality it builds a sovereign realm. While the canvas and the pigment on it are parts of reality, the work of art constructed out of them exists in an ideal space which can no more come in contact with actual space than tones can touch smells. (p.267)

APPENDIX C: COMMUNICATION CONDUCT IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY (1953)  
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## APPENDIX D

## RECORDED CITATIONS OF GOFFMAN'S BOOKS, 1971-1985

	1971-75	1976-80	1981-85
1956/1959 THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE	424	538	457
1961 ASYLUMS	710	732	576
1961 ENCOUNTERS	138	161	104
1963 BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC PLACES	118	169	88
1963 STIGMA	313	370	376
1967 INTERACTION RITUAL	213	186	222
1969 STRATEGIC INTERACTION	54	71	56
1971 RELATIONS IN PUBLIC	132	150	182
1974 FRAME ANALYSIS	30	179	314
1979 GENDER ADVERTISEMENTS	-	25	60
1981 FORMS OF TALK	-	-	78

Source: Social Science Citation Index, 1971-75, 1976-80, 1981-85.

## APPENDIX E

THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE (1956):  
PRINCIPAL AMENDMENTS TO SUBSEQUENT EDITIONS

<u>1956 Edinburgh edition</u>	<u>1959 Anchor edition</u>	<u>1971 Penguin edition</u>
-	Biographical note	Updated biographical note
Title page	Unchanged	Unchanged
Frontispiece (from Santayana)	Unchanged	Unchanged but placed after the 'Contents' page
Acknowledgements	Unchanged	Unchanged but placed after the 'Preface'
Preface	Addition of sentence referring to Shetland Island study (and reference to Goffman 1953 as n.1)	As 1959 (p.9 and note at pp.9-10)
<u>Introduction</u>		
p.2	New paragraph at p.2	As 1959 (p.14)
p.2	Addition of quotation from W.I. Thomas at p.3 (and n.2)	As 1959 (p.15)
p.3	Addition of new paragraph including quotations from Walker and Sansom, pp.4-6	As 1959 (pp.16-17)
p.3	Addition of three new paragraphs on the 'fundamental asymmetry' of the communicative process (pp.7-9)	As 1959 (pp.18-20)
Chapter 1		
<u>Performances</u>		
p.12	Addition of 10 lines to paragraph running pp.20-21 on the fate of idealism in medical school (Becker and Greer - sic)	As 1959 (p.31)
p.16	Inclusion of material from footnote to text, pp.25-26	As 1959 (p.36)

- p.25 Addition of one new paragraph and quotations from Johnson and Komarovsky, pp.38-39 As 1959 (pp.46-48)
- p.25 Addition of two new paragraphs and quotation from Wight Bakke, pp.39-40 As 1959 (pp.48-49)
- p.28 Addition of sentence about concealable sources of illegal supply, pp.44-45 As 1959 (p.53)
- p.29 Inclusion of quotation from Willoughby from footnote to text, p.45
- p.29 Inclusion of quotation from Page from footnote to text, pp.45-46 As 1959 (p.54)
- p.29 Inclusion of material from Weinlein from footnote to text and change of terminology ('trades' to 'callings'), p.46 As 1959 (p.55)
- p.30 Inclusion of quotation from Stryker from footnote to text, p.47 As 1959 (p.56)
- p.30 Addition of three new sentences about entry qualifications, pp.47-48 As 1959 (p.56)
- p.32 Inclusion of quotation from The Canons of Good Breeding from footnote to text, pp.50-51 As 1959 (pp.58-59)
- p.46 Addition of new section 'Reality and contrivance' pp.70-76 As 1959 (pp.76-82)
- Chapter 2
- Teams
- p.47 Addition of three new sentences about internists' practices in hospital, p.78 As 1959 (pp.83-84)

p.48	Grammatical reform- ulation of definition of team, p.79	As 1959 (p.85)
p.49	Addition of sentence about 'self- distantiation' and footnote to Mannheim (n.7), p.81	As 1959 (pp.86-87)
p.50	Deletion of second paragraph in 1956:50 and addition of five new sentences about teamwork undertaken for an absent audience, p.82	As 1959 (p.87)
p.55	Addition of quotation from Holcombe, pp.88- 89	As 1959 (p.93)
p.60	Inclusion of quotation from Kafka from foot- note to text, pp.95-96	As 1959 (p.100)
p.60	Addition of new sentence and quotation from Spinley, pp.96-97	As 1959 (pp.100-101)
p.60	Addition of quotation from Miller, p.97	As 1959 (p.101)
p.62	Addition of new paragraph, including quotation from Waugh, pp.100-101	As 1959 (pp.104-105)
p.64	Addition of three new sentences and quotation from Hecht, pp.103-104	As 1959 (p.107)
p.65	Addition of new final paragraph on 'the sweet guilt of conspirators', p.105	As 1959 (p.108)

### Chapter 3

#### Regions and Region Behaviour

p.69	Addition of new paragraph, including quotation from Besant, pp.110-11	as 1959 (pp.113-114)
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- p.72 Addition of four new paragraphs amplifying how crofters culture prevails at Shetland Hotel, pp.116-118 As 1959 (pp.118-120)
- p.73 Addition of new paragraph including quotation from Kuper, pp.119-120 As 1959 (pp.121-122)
- p.74 Inclusion of quotation from Dickens from footnote to text, p.122 As 1959 (p.124)
- p.75 Inclusion of Hughes' observation about Negre employees from footnote to text, p.124 As 1959 (pp.125-126)
- p.77 Inclusion of two new sentences and two quotations from Esquire Etiquette, pp.126-127 As 1959 (pp.127-128)
- p.77 Addition of new sentence about American models, p.127 As 1959 (p.128)
- p.78 Inclusion of observation about the putatively 'regressive' character of backstage behaviour from footnote to text, p.128 As 1959 (pp.129-130)
- p.78 Addition of new sentence about airline stewardesses' backstage behaviour, p.129 As 1959 (p.130)
- p.80 Addition of three sentences about the modesty of two female informants in Shetland Isle, pp.131-132 As 1959 (p.132)
- p.82 Addition of three new sentences and quotation from Ponsonby, pp.133-134 As 1959 (p.134)
- p.83 Addition of new paragraph and quotation from Williams, pp.135-136 as 1959 (p.136)

p.83                      Addition of two new              As 1959 (p.137)  
sentences and  
quotation from  
Melville, pp.136-137

#### Chapter 4

##### Discrepant Roles

p.91                      Addition of new                      As 1959 (p.145)  
sentence about  
informers and  
reference to Speir<sup>e</sup>,  
p.147

p.92                      Inclusion of quotation              As 1959 (p.147)  
from Cottrell from  
footnote to text, p.148

p.92                      Addition of new                      As 1959 (p.147)  
sentence about the  
prostitute and  
reference to Murtagh  
and Harris, p.148

p.99                      Grammatical rephrasing              As 1959 (p.155)  
of first two sentences  
of final paragraph,  
p.156

p.103                      Addition of three new              as 1959 (p.161)  
sentences and new  
footnote about  
Shetland Isle gentry's  
views of crofters,  
pp.162-163 + n.23

p.105                      Inclusion of quotation              As 1959 (p.163)  
from Burke from  
footnote to text,  
p.165

#### Chapter 5

##### Communication Out of Character

p.107                      New paragraph beginning              As 1959 (p.166)  
at 'Of course...' (1956:  
107, line 17), p.167

p.107                      Inclusion of observation              As 1959 (p.166)  
about patients for  
medical research from Fox  
from footnote to text,  
p.167



p.107	Addition of five new sentences and quotation from Clark, pp.168-169	as 1959 (pp.167-168)
p.108	Addition of three new sentences about staff-guest relations at Shetland Hotel, p.170	As 1959 (p.169)
p.110	Addition of new sentence and quotation from Maurer, pp.173-174	As 1959 (pp.171-172)
p.117	Addition of two new sentences, observations of Shetland Hotel, p.182	as 1959 (p.180)
p.117	Inclusion of broadcasting studio observation and quotations of Parsonby and Archibald, from footnote to text, pp.182-183	As 1959 (p.180)
p.119	Addition of new sentence and quotation from Schein, pp.187-188	As 1959 (pp.184-185)
p.119	Inclusion of Becker's observation on jazz musicians, from footnote to text, p.188	As 1959 (p.185)
p.120	Addition of new paragraph, including quotation from Hecht, pp.189-190	As 1959 (p.186)
p.121	Addition of new paragraph including reference to Potter, Goffman, Strauss and Haley, p.191	As 1959 (pp.187-188)
p.126	Addition of three new sentences and quotation from de Hartog, pp.197-198	As 1959 (pp.194-195)
p.131	Addition of new paragraph, p.206	As 1959 (pp.201-202)

## Chapter 6

The Arts of Impression Management

p.133	Addition of two quotations from etiquette manuals, p.210	As 1959 (pp.204-205)
p.135	Addition of five new sentences and three quotations from Hecht, pp.212-213	As 1959 (pp.207-208)
p.142	Inclusion of observation about mealtime practices, from footnote to text, p.222	As 1959 (p.216)
p.142	Addition of sentence about London prostitutes and reference to Mayhew, p.222	As 1959 (p.216)
p.143	Addition of five new sentences, various observations from Shetland Isle, p.224	As 1959 (p.218)
p.145	Addition of seven new sentences about warning signs of impending visitors, p.227	As 1959 (pp.220-221)
p.148	Addition of observation from the writer's study of a mental hospital ward, 1953-54, p.231	As 1959 (p.225)
p.149	Addition of new paragraph including quotation from Murtagh & Harris, pp.232-233	As 1959 (p.226)
p.151	Addition of three new paragraphs including quotation from Komarovsky, pp.236-237	As 1959 (pp.229-230)

## Chapter 7

Conclusion

- p.160                      Addition of new                      As 1959 (p.240)  
sentence about West  
Coast cultural  
patterns, p.248
- p.162                      Addition of new section, As 1959 (pp.244-247)  
'Staging and the Self',  
pp.252-255

## APPENDIX F

## SOME FRAME ANALYTIC CONSIDERATIONS OF GAME SHOW HUMOUR

Introduction

This paper takes up the argument of Chapter 4 that the concepts and frameworks of the formal sociologies of Simmel and Goffman require testing out to determine their utility for sociological analysis. It examines a small body of empirical materials drawn from a television game show in which flirtatious conduct and sexual innuendo are prominent features. It is principally designed to test out aspects of Goffman's frame analysis and Simmel's essay, 'Flirtation', although it has a broader bearing on their interests in gender differentiation (cf section 3.6 above). It also attempts to implement Goffman's suggestion at the conclusion of Communication Conduct that the study of television shows might comprise one class of extraordinary events which may open our eyes to what ordinarily occurs (1953:360-361).

Goffman described the kind of analytical strategy here employed as an 'exercise'. According to Harvey Sacks (who also had occasion to use this strategy), an exercise is a preliminary investigation that 'when it was undertaken, what a solution to its problem should consist of was not known' (Sacks, 1975:57). The paper is conceived as an 'exercise' in this sense; it is an attempt to consider the potential and possibilities of Simmel's essay and the frame analytical schema when applied to a specific

body of material. The largest part of the paper considers Goffman's schema and the issues to be addressed include: what aspects of social phenomena are highlighted or thematised by frame analysis? (the perspective's agenda); what are the characteristic questions posed by frame analysis? (its schedule); what guidelines are provided for carrying out frame analysis? (the methodical procedures of the perspective).

Underlying these questions is an assumption that frame analysis is indeed a general and systematic perspective that can be applied in the ways outlined. It is probably fair to say that this is not the usual assumption associated with Goffman's intellectual production. On the contrary, Goffman is widely regarded as a 'one-off', as a unique talent in sociology, a sensitive, provocative and indeed brilliant observer of the details of face-to-face interaction, but not a systematic sociologist with contribution to make to a cumulative body of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Our first task, then, must be to consider the place of frame analysis in Goffman's sociology and the relation of that work to the more systematic forms of sociological investigation that it is normally contrasted with.

#### The Place of Frame Analysis in Goffman's Thought

In many ways, Frame Analysis occupies a unique position in the corpus of Goffman's writings. At 576 pages, it is quite simply the longest of his eleven books. It is one of the minority of his books that was written as a monograph rather than as a collection of free-standing or interrelated essays (the

other monographs being: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Stigma, Behavior in Public Places, and Gender Advertisements). Arguably, Goffman was more at home in the essay than the monograph format (Strong, 1982), but the sheer size of Frame Analysis should give us pause for thought. So too should its title, which promises a method, perhaps analogous to content analysis or componential analysis. The titles of nearly all of Goffman's other books simply draw attention to facets of the interaction order. This title, however, suggests that a coherent method of analysis is about to be supplied, a method that is teachable and reproducible.

In one sense, Frame Analysis represents Goffman's response to the challenge provided by the rise of ethnomethodology and related phenomenologically-inspired developments in the late 1960s and early seventies. The novelty of Goffman's earlier work was that it addressed the dynamics of encounters from a series of exclusively sociological points of view. Goffman insisted that face-to-face interaction - what occurs between people when in one another's physical presence - warrants sociological analysis because it constitutes a distinct dimension of social life, a dimension he was later to term the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1983). Goffman's central accomplishment was to show that interaction possessed a social organisation amenable to sociological study. He employed various metaphorical devices - most notably those of dramaturgy and the game - to show how the various constituent elements of interaction (content and tone of talk, physical appearance, posture, glances, etc) are socially

arranged and collectively co-ordinated to ensure that the encounter is successfully 'brought off'. Before Goffman, the sociology of interaction did not exist; the books and papers published up to 1974 demonstrated various sociological possibilities for the analysis of the dynamics of encounters.

The publication of Frame Analysis in 1974 adds a cognitivist twist to Goffman's work: in this book he turns his attention to the sociological analysis of human experience and indeed its most fundamental argument is that experience is socially organised. The key concept is frame:

'I assume that definitions of the situation will be built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such basic elements as I am able to identify ... "frame analysis" is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience' (pp.10-11).

More straightforwardly, Goffman's aim is the isolation of 'some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events and to analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject' (p.10). Frame analysis can be thought of as an American formal or structural phenomenology. Like the phenomenology of Schutz, it sees commonsense understanding mediated by the real world activities of persons to comprise the proper focus of analysis. But unlike Schutz, Goffman is unwilling to grant paramount status to the 'world of everyday life' nor does he consider that human experience is best approached from an analysis of human

consciousness. Instead, there is in Goffman a more behavioural bias. Frames of understanding are maintained in consciousness and action:

'... these frameworks are not merely a matter of mind but correspond in some sense to the way in which an aspect of the activity itself is organized ... Organizational premises are involved, and these are something cognition somehow arrives at, not something cognition creates or generates. Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting. These organizational premises - sustained both in the mind and in activity - I call the frame of the activity.' (Goffman, 1974:247)

Just as Goffman's earlier work attempts to sociologically analyse face-to-face interaction, so too Frame Analysis endeavours to sociologically analyse human experience by revealing the ways in which it is socially organised.

Central to the experiential regrounding of Goffman's perspective are three basic classes of frame: primary frameworks, keys and keyings, and fabrications. The primary framework is the elemental interpretive scheme which enables the individual to make sense of an otherwise meaningless strip of activity. The use of primary frameworks is such a massive and omnipresent feature of social life that:

'... we can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now ... mere perceiving, then, is a much more active penetration of the world than at first might be thought.' (1974:38)



Strips of activity are made intelligible by primary frameworks, but this intelligibility is not inviolate and indeed a major focus of Frame Analysis is the vulnerability of particular frames which can always in principle be transformed into something else. As Goffman later emphasised:

'We face the moment-to-moment possibility (warranted in particular cases or not) that our settled sense of what is going on beyond the current social situation or within it may have to begin to be questioned or changed.' (1981b:68)

Goffman identifies two classes of transformed framework: keys and keyings, and designs and fabrications. In the case of keyed frames, all the participants are aware that the activity is transformed, but in designs and fabrications there is an asymmetry: the mark has a false belief about the activity, is unaware of the true nature of the transformation that has occurred (see Goffman 1974: chs 3+4 for elaboration).

This paper seeks to consider the relevance of frame analysis for a sociological understanding of the humour found in a game show. The game show is a representational phenomenon set at one step removed from 'real life'. But as I hope to show, the representational character of this paper's topic matter makes it all the more amenable to a frame analysis. Game shows are not 'real life' but rather types of make-believe. However, Goffman was long interested in this relation and in fact proposes that there is a more intimate relation between make-believe and reality than is commonly thought. This point is sharply brought

out in the acid but celebrated commentary of The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (1970) where Gouldner observes that Goffman 'declares a moratorium on the conventional distinction between make-believe and reality' (1970: 380). Analytically, the moratorium is renewed in frame analysis but there is an emphasis on examining how the conventional distinction is constituted. Thus, what is problematic for the frame analyst is the assignment of strips of activity to make-believe or 'reality' and it is a problematic task precisely because elements of each interpenetrate the other. For Goffman, everyday life cannot be characterised, as it can for Schutz, as a single and distinct realm which has 'paramount' status in the experience of the individual. Rather, elements of game, theatre, hoax and so on are to be found in everyday reality and indeed it is just these elements that frame analysis sensitises us to. Goffman spells out this argument at the beginning of the final chapter of Frame Analysis:

'So everyday life, real enough in itself, often seems to be a laminated adumbration of a pattern or model that is itself a typification of quite uncertain realm status ... Life may not be an imitation of art, but ordinary conduct, in a sense, is an imitation of the proprieties, a gesture of the exemplary forms, and the primal realization of these ideals belongs more to make-believe than to reality.' (1974:562)

Actual, everyday activity consists of 'quickly changing frames' many of which derive from fanciful, nonliteral realms. Hence Goffman's argument:

'... that strips of activity, including the figures which people them, must be treated as a single problem for analysis. Realms of being are the proper objects here for study; and here, the everyday is not a special domain to be placed in contrast to the others, but merely another realm.' (ibid:564)

It is because of the interpenetration of fictive and literal realms that Goffman recommends the close study of each in order to inform us about the other, and therein lies part of the justification for the present paper. Analysis of game show banter might serve to illuminate aspects of the arrangements between the sexes.

#### Applying the Frame Analytic Perspective

Although there appears to be growing interest in frame analysis, as indicated by the frequency that social scientists cite Goffman's book (see table, Appendix D), there have been relatively few attempts to carry out frame analyses of particular domains of social life (but see, eg, Gonos, 1976; Birrell, 1978; Carey, 1976; Strong, 1979; Maynard, 1984; Davies, 1981 and of course Goffman, 1974, chs.5+13, Goffman, 1979, ch.2, and Goffman, 1981a, ch.4). One reason for this is that frame analysis is a distinct analytical perspective and not simply a method of research, like say content analysis. Goffman provides us with a statement of the key concepts and characteristic concerns of the perspective, and he also provides 'demonstrations' of how the perspective can be applied (in his studies of the theatre, talk, pictures, and the ceremonial lecture). But although examples

of frame analyses are given by Goffman, he does not provide rules for the application of the perspective to any domain of social life. He does not spell out rules of procedure but operates in a more ostensive fashion: 'look at how I've conducted this piece of analysis and learn what you can from my example' he appears to say. No more formalised reproducible and teachable method is evident and it is precisely the absence of a reproducible and teachable method that makes some commentators consider Goffman's sociology as an art form rather than a systematic method. Gamson, for example, asks 'can we train graduate students to be Goffmans'; can we 'teach a conscientious clod to do this kind of analysis'? (1975:605). Clearly, we cannot. But this line of criticism confuses the production of Goffman's sociology with the uses to which it can be put and it is the latter which is the concern of this paper.

It is perhaps worth emphasising that part of the rationale for Goffman's sociology resides in the extent to which he is successful in 'tooling up' researchers for more detailed analyses of the interaction order than he himself is able to conduct. In one sense, Goffman is a kind of 'grand theorist' of the interaction order whose work aims to articulate its major structures and processes. He sensitises us to the existence of phenomena such as 'face-saving' (Goffman, 1967), provides the basic concepts for its analysis but leaves to others the task of applying these concepts to specific social situations (such as, eg, the 'singles dance'; see Berk, 1977). The understanding of ordinary social behaviour which has always been central to

Goffman's entire sociological enterprise is facilitated not by the collection of more and more facts but rather by the development of concepts and coherent analytic perspectives which interrelate the concepts. In this respect it is important to locate Goffman in the formal sociological tradition of Simmel (cf. Smith, 1989a) and if I may borrow a phrase from Zerubavel (1980) I am bound to say that if Simmel were a fieldworker, he would have worked much as Goffman did. Moreover Goffman recognised that his concepts and frameworks needed to be tested out in ethnographic research. Thus it is to this work that we must turn if we wish to discover just how fruitful Goffman's insights are, for as Goffman himself once . . . recognised in the Introduction of one of his books, 'none of the concepts elaborated may have a future' (1981a: 1).

Although Goffman does not provide a well-codified set of procedures for doing frame analysis, it is possible to glean from his work certain core issues for analysis. Goffman draws on an important distinction between the 'rim' of a frame which 'tells us just what sort of status in the real world the activity has' (the game show frame is a rim description) and the 'core' or innermost activity which is whatever exists to engross a participant (eg an answer to a question posed as part of the game). Between rim and core there may be any number of 'laminations' (1974:82) i.e. rekeyings and other types of transformation (eg parody of the game show contestant's accent or facial expression) which may be safely contained by the frame (ibid:159). How activity is managed, both in the frame and just

outside of it is a major concern (ibid:ch.7). These issues provide the main focus for the discussion which follows.

#### GAME SHOW HUMOUR

This paper examines the relevance of frame analysis for a sociological understanding of game show humour in which sexual innuendo occasionally occurs. The game show investigated, 'Blind Date', is a ritualised exercise in matchmaking which an audience and the TV viewing public are allowed to share. A personable single young man or woman addresses questions to three no less personable and also presumably single contestants of the opposite sex. Contestants and questioner cannot see each other (they are separated by a wall) and contestants endeavour to give witty replies to the questions put to them. At the end of the questioning one contestant is chosen to join the questioner for a blind date, a day out at as-yet-to-be-disclosed location. Questioner and contestants now meet each other face-to-face and the location of the blind date is revealed. The following week contestant and questioner return to recount their (usually hilariously asymmetrical) versions of what took place on the blind date. According to one commentator, the popularity of the show derives in part from 'the way it plays with one of our most universal social and cultural experiences - the formation of the couple'. It is conducted in sufficiently good-natured a way to encourage us 'to laugh at the intrinsic ridiculousness of courtship' (Medhurst, 1987: 29).

On the face of it, then, certain real world activities, namely flirtatious encounters between 'eligible' men and women and 'dates' between previously unacquainted persons, are 'keyed' in that they become the topic of a television entertainment show. Instead of 'real' flirtation and dating, we see a transformed version, men and women playing at flirtation and dating. Simmel (1984:145; 1949:258-259) suggests that flirtation plays with the reality of erotic desire; thus what we see on the show is two steps or transformations away from this reality. But the dating and flirtation we see is not haphazard but is organised according to the show's rules: a game (Guttman, 1978) is being played. Moreover, it is a game that has a competitive element ie there are winners and losers. Thus 'Blind Date' can be characterised as a contest - but unlike those physical contests we call sports, and intellectual contests such as card games or chess, it is perhaps best thought of a social contest where the stakes are the interpersonal skills and 'character' (Goffman, 1967) of the participants (see Appendix G). Unlike most game shows, the 'prize' is not material (cash prizes, goods) nor honorific (a points score as a measure of, eg knowledgeability) but social: the prospect of a day out with an unknown member of the opposite sex. It is perhaps these features that make it difficult to frame the 'rim' of the show's content. Like Gonos (1976:192) on his first viewing of go-go, I initially found 'Blind Date' a source of discomfort. Unable to frame the show with any assurance, I encountered it as a 'negative experience' (Goffman, 1974: 378-379). 'Blind Date' makes a contest out of activities

which may in the vernacular possess game-like properties, but which are not usually considered to be a matter of public winning and losing.

Thus the show keys the ordinary activities of dating and flirtation. But in ordinary life these activities occur between persons who have the full evidence of their senses on which to base their judgements. In 'Blind Date' both questioner and contestant can only hear each other's voices; important information about the physical appearance etc of each lies beyond the 'evidential boundary' (1974: 215) of the situation until after the critical decision has been made. This sensory restriction encourages some complex readjustment and realignment by both parties as appraisals are made of the questions posed and answers given in the light of questioner and contestants' preferences. The process of assessment is assisted by the hostess of the show, Cilla Black. The audience is in a voyeuristic position in all this: it is able to see the physical appearance and responses of contestants and questioner alike. In the interaction between questioner and contestants there are ample opportunities for the strategic playing of 'expression games' (Goffman, 1969) and thus it is apt to characterise this part of the show as a 'design' or 'fabrication' (Goffman, 1974: ch.4).

The rim of the frame of the show is remarkably stable. Obviously, the opportunity for editing provided by the pre-recording of the show before its transmission accounts in



[excerpt 1]

Contestant number one promises Brian 'wild exciting experiences ...'

01 Brian: Sounds rather ominous to me actually  
 02 (laughter)  
 03 Cilla: What does ominous mean?  
 04 (laughter)  
 05 Brian: You don't know what ominous means?=  
 06 Cilla: =Don't shout at me I was a war baby  
 07 (laughter)  
 08 Brian: My third question ...  
 09 Cilla: [Well what does it mean then?  
 10 (laughter)  
 11 Brian: What?  
 12 Cilla: Onimous, onimous  
 13 Brian: Ominous  
 14 Cilla: Ominous  
 15 Brian: Well it means rather worrying  
 16 Cilla: Oh does it  
 17 Brian: [Yeh. Anyway can we move on to number three?  
 18 Cilla: [Who started this?  
 19 (extended audience laughter + applause)  
 20 Cilla: Now you've made me feel very onimous  
 21 Brian: Ominous  
 22 Cilla: OMINOUS well don't spit all over me  
 23 (laughter)  
 24 Cilla: Now shall we go on to number three  
 25 Brian: Yes number three  
 26 Cilla: Ominous  
 27 Brian: Number three three I'd like to address to number  
 28 three I like to think that I could be someone's ideal man  
 29 Cilla: What - after that?  
 30 (laughter)  
 31 Brian: Can I carry on please?  
 32 Cilla: Yes Yes (laughter) onimous

part for this: frame-threatening elements can simply be cut. But it is noteworthy that both hostess and contestants seldom exceed the 'participation status' (Goffman, 1974: 224) set out for them. One example of <sup>how</sup> a challenge to the understandings governing host contestant interaction is neatly handled <sup>is</sup> by rekeying the threat in a humorous way (see excerpt 1).

Brian's use of 'ominous' (line 01) is perceived by Cilla as a threat to the light and unserious frame of the show and she proceeds to tease him about it. Brian's replies to Cilla's teases (lines 05, 11, 15, 17, 21, and 31) are 'po-faced', a standard response of recipients of teases (Drew, 1987). The teases are methods of deviance attribution (don't use words like 'ominous' on this show) and social control (now you have, you'll be made to suffer for it) which contain the threat to the light and unserious frame .

The stability of the rim of the frame is also enhanced by the use of certain 'episoding conventions' or 'brackets' (Goffman, 1974: 251ff) most notably the opening and closing credits, although within the show itself further bracketing occurs. This is most obviously evident in the ritualised introduction sequences where the first name, county of residence and occupation of contestants is disclosed, and in the sequence of still shots that precedes the presentation of the previous week's actual blind date.

The issues considered thus far are largely macro-frame analytical matters concerning with the overall status of the game

show frame and its anchoring in the wider world. Let us now turn to consider some more microanalytical issues concerning the management of sexual innuendo.

Sexual innuendo in the game show occurs in the context of flirtatious encounters between unacquainted persons of the opposite sex. In sociology the locus classicus for this form of conduct is Simmel's essay, 'Flirtation' (1984; orig. 1911). For Simmel, the essence of the conduct of the flirtatious woman (for it is women who are usually - although Simmel recognises, not always - cast in this role) is that she refuses to allow a settled understanding of the terms of her relationship to a man to develop. Simmel writes:

'...the distinctiveness of the flirt lies in the fact that she awakens delight and desire by means of a unique antithesis and synthesis: through the alternation or simultaneity of accommodation and denial; by a symbolic allusive assent and dissent, acting "as if from a distance"; or, platonically expressed, through placing having and not-having in a state of polar tension even as she seems to make them felt concurrently.' (1984:134)

Simmel continues:

'If we want to fix the polar coordinates of flirtation conceptually, it exhibits three possible syntheses. Flirtation as flattery: "Although you might indeed be able to conquer me, I won't allow myself to be conquered." Flirtation as contempt: "Although I would actually myself to be conquered, you aren't able to do it." Flirtation as provocation: "Perhaps you can conquer me, perhaps not - try it!"' (ibid:135)

The maintenance of an essential tension between consent and refusal is a central feature: thus 'every conclusive decision brings flirtation to an end' (ibid:136). Consequently, flirtatious conduct consists of various practices of 'semi-concealment' where

'... submission or presentation of the self is suspended by partial concealment or refusal of the self, in such a way that the whole is fantasized all the more vividly and the desire for the totality of reality is excited all the more consciously and intensively, as a result of the tension between this form and that of reality as incompletely disclosed.' (ibid)

It is in these practices of 'semi-concealment' that Simmel locates the 'charm' of flirtation and explains why 'flirtation debases neither its subject nor its object' (ibid:149).

As these quotations indicate, Simmel is not easy reading. No illustrative materials are provided. As was argued in chapter 5, the reader's commonsense knowledge of this form of conduct constitutes a central element of the intelligibility of Simmel's account. The reader's experience and intuitions are drawn upon to give the analysis specific sense. To sociologically analyse commonsense requires a more empirical approach than is provided by Simmel. Goffman's frame analysis, it is suggested, provides such an approach and can shed some light on how flirtation is interactionally accomplished and can indicate the place of humour in its management. What follows are a few, preliminary and limited observations about the workings of sexual innuendo in the show.

The game show frame ensures that if interaction can be cast in a joking or fun way, then it will be. Thus the sexual innuendo that does occur will usually be introduced in a humorous vein rather than by 'sly remarks'. In Handelman and Kapferer's (1972) terms, the game show issues a generalised 'license to joke' and there is a preponderance of 'category routinized joking frames' (1972: 485) arising from the routines and roles of the show itself. Sexual interests, broadly conceived, animate much of the interaction between contestants, but these are largely framed in a humorous, and thus non-threatening way.

A leading routine is the asking of three questions, one at a time, to each of the three contestants. The questions are obviously rehearsed (and written down on a card in the questioner's hand) but, to judge from the mode of delivery and content of the answers, these too are probably rehearsed. So the question-answer sequence is keyed in the rehearsal frame. What does not appear to be so transformed is the questioner's response to the answer. This response gives critical clues to the audience about the assessment the questioner is in the process of making. Consider the following fragment:

[excerpt 2]

Karen: Right this is question number one and it's directed to number one. If you were staying the night at my house, and you saw me just as I was going to bed, and I was wearing a winceyette nightie, a hairnet, and carrying my false teeth in a jar, what would you do? (laughter)

⋮

Karen: Right number two what would you do if you saw me dressed like that?

George: Well I-I promise I'd not laugh Karen, I'd promise I wouldn't laugh just as long as you wouldn't laugh at my flesh-coloured pyjamas. (laughter)

Karen: Flesh-coloured! (laughter)

Karen: The thing is my parents would be there so would you really walk round looking like that?

George: Well not but perhaps I'd just stick with the flesh-coloured boxer shorts then ( )

(laughter)

After the first (rehearsed) question-answer sequence between Karen and George, interaction becomes more open, less premeditated, more 'real' although of course no less actual than what has gone on before.

In the next excerpt contestant number three, Bill, introduces sexual innuendo in his reply into a relatively untransformed way but is able to key the potential threat represented by so unvarnished a comment by non-verbally parodying ballet dancers and his own physical capabilities.

[excerpt 3]

Karen: Right, question number two. I used to do a lot of ballet and I love it. Would you make a good ballet dancer and if so why?

⋮

Karen: Right number three what about you?

Bill: I would make a good ballet dancer because I like - er - I like picking on girls in short skirts and I've got a smashing pair of legs (gets up and does a mock pirouette) (laughter)

Karen: Do you think you'd be strong enough to lift me then?

(laughter continues)

(Karen and Cilla look puzzled)

Karen and Cilla's puzzlement arises because they cannot see the mock pirouette or appreciate the parody and the keying of 'I like picking on girls in short skirts' it conveys, but they know that something is going on and Cilla peers around the wall dividing them.

By the time the third question is to be asked, contestants and questioner have revealed something of themselves, and this is evident in the content and tone of some of Karen's comments:

[excerpt 4]

Karen: Question number three and this is directed to number three. I like rugged and romantic heroes. What sort of hero would you like to be?

⋮

Karen: What about number two?

George: Bond, James Bond, but the - er, the - er only difference is that I'd leave you shaken and stirred.

Cilla: Oh!

Karen: You've got that much confidence in yourself!

Karen's 'what about number two' has an impatient tone to it, and her comment to George indicates that she considers him far too 'forward' and 'direct'. He has exceeded an appropriate 'role-character formula' (Goffman, 1974:275). Indeed, Karen's comment downkeys George's humorous framing of the James Bond remark, showing that she considers it evidence of a somewhat inflated ego (in fact, Karen chooses number three, Bill, for her blind date).

### Conclusion

Goffman's approach enjoins us to consider flirtation as an interactional matter, as a *form of conduct manifested in the particulars of interaction*. Goffman urges the sociologist to 'stand close' to sources of data and to treat data in its own right and in its own terms. Zimmerman draws on Goffman's argument in articulating what he calls the 'autonomy principle' which

'... does not necessarily imply that interaction is a realm of activity empirically disconnected from other institutional forms. Rather, it expresses a commitment to the investigation of social interaction as a distinctive domain with its own organization without presuming at the outset that its features directly reflect institutional or societal properties of processes.' (Zimmerman, 1988:417)

Adopting Goffman's recommendations and frame analytical schema enables some of Simmel's suggestions about flirtation to be



empirically investigated; in excerpts 2,3 and 4 we can see what the practices of 'semi-concealment' actually consist of. However, not all of Goffman's analytical frameworks are suggestive of fruitful empirical paths forward. I shall conclude with an illustration of Zimmerman's (1987) argument that Goffman's (1981a) ideas on 'footing' do not offer much help in understanding the interactional accomplishment of the phenomenon.

One of the attractions of Blind Date is that it affords an opportunity for the audience to witness *some fancy interactional* footwork by the contestants and host. The notion from Goffman designed to articulate this aspect of interaction is called, appropriately enough, 'footing'. Footing refers to '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' (1981a:128). Footing addresses the issue of how to regard and respond to the sometimes quickly changing shifts in the frame of our ordinary talk. These nuances cannot be adequately grasped by any sociolinguistics that operates with simple notions of 'speaker' and 'hearer'. A better distinction, Goffman reasons, is between 'production format' and 'participation framework'. The production format of utterances refers to the configuration of speaking roles taken during talk (animator, author and principal) whilst the participation framework articulates the main axes of hearership (ratified/unratified; addressed/unaddressed). What Goffman presents us with is a disaggregation of the traditional concepts of speaker and hearer roles. But what is absent is a

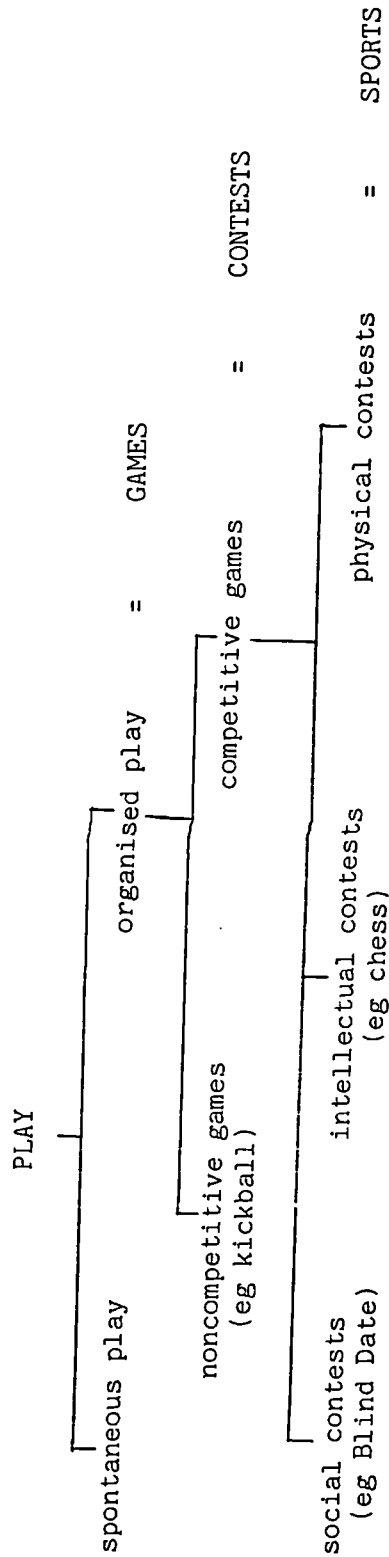
consideration of how these roles are interactionally achieved. Let me illustrate from Excerpt One.

Cilla in line 03 initiates a shift in her situated identity of game-show host to a discourse-relevant identity of inquirer about the meaning of a word she claims not to know (distinctions from Zimmerman, 1987). Brian at first (line 08) appears to treat Cilla's inquiry as disingenuous but Cilla insists (line 09) in having her question treated seriously. Brian then goes on to make four attempts to re-establish the original footing of the exchange (at lines 17, 25, 27 and 31). Each attempt is accompanied by subversive attempts by Cilla to undermine the initial footing (lines 18, 26, 29 and 32), the most successful of which are the product of Cilla's humorous interjections ('Who started this?', line 18; 'What - after that?', line 29). The establishment and subversion of a particular footing is something worked at by and through the activities of the interactants. However, Goffman in 'Footing' directs our attention away from interactional details and particulars of sequential organisation towards the diversity of social roles subsumed under the speaker/hearer rubric.

It has been argued in this paper that Goffman provides some concepts, frameworks and guidelines for placing Simmel on an empirical basis. But in some respects, he does not go far enough, or takes us in an empirically unproductive direction. Goffman's approach may require further empirical radicalisation such as is provided by conversation analysis. Thus keeping faith

with the spirit of Goffman's work may require departing from its letter.

A CLASSIFICATION OF PLAY, GAMES,  
CONTESTS AND SPORTS



Loosely adapted from: Allen Gutmann, From Ritual to Record  
(New York: Columbia University Press, 1978)

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