
Maps and Diggings

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In an introduction and overview of the work and substantive contributions made by Erving Goffman to the study of social relationships (see, e.g., Goffman, 1974, 1981, 1983), Drew and Wootton (1988) observed that Goffman recurrently failed to offer details, and thus evidence, of how people actually achieve the activities they are claimed to produce. Although Goffman's sharp and altogether intuitive insights drew constant attention to finely textured moments of human existence--most notably the practices and procedures allowing people to organize transsituational involvements and thereby order face-to-face interactions--in the end, readers were left with a conceptually rich vocabulary (e.g., *rituals, frames, facework, remedial interchanges*) for identifying and discerning the patterns of everyday life. However useful Goffman's conceptual frameworks might be for understanding the unique *ways* humans order their affairs with one another, Drew and Wootton noted that they remain essentially underdeveloped:

Such concepts are not themselves the endpoints of analysis. Whether people share the interactional concerns identified by Goffman, and whether they orient to such concerns in the manner he suggests, are frequently questions which await further enquiry. Goffman himself rarely went down that road. He was often content simply to indicate the potential relevance and significance of the interactional parameters in question; as a result, the maps he provides of this new terrain are often akin to those one buys on holiday in certain countries--suggestive sketches rather than definitive. (p. 6)

Such a position is by no means a discounting of Goffman's early and significant contributions to both the study of social interaction **and its**

status as a legitimate enterprise within the social sciences. On the contrary, Goffman's conceptualizations continue to resonate throughout contemporary interaction studies, providing useful resources when raising and fleshing out issues, and in these varied ways reveal scholars' intellectual indebtedness to Goffman's work.

Nevertheless, it might be argued that the lack of detail—available only from diggings through inspectable evidence of actual (recorded, transcribed) conversations—is problematic when attempting to validate the resemblances between Goffman's characterizations of actions and how interactants display real-time understandings of the moments in which they are integrally involved (cf. Schegloff, 1988). Simply because such moments are replete with spontaneously generated problems and innovative resolutions designed by and for the participants, inherent to and deeply implicated within the delicate and changing landscapes of the talk at hand, it is not possible to capture the working order of routine interactions by conceptualizing, hypothesizing, or, in other ways, idealizing possible, rather than actual practices, especially when attempting to document their consequences for shaping and being shaped by subsequent and emerging streams of activity. Devoid of a methodology for systematically collecting, analyzing, and reporting on naturally occurring events in ways making ordinary peoples' orientations available to readers for critical inspection, researchers' observations are constrained less by practices employed by speakers and hearers and more by their own descriptive competencies for articulating envisioned worlds.

Such envisionings are the stuff of conceptual frameworks, and they inevitably constitute diverse mappings of interactional terrains. Although maps are often helpful for exploration, they are misleading and inaccurate; they offer essentially incomplete versions of the scenes they are designed to depict. More important, maps are incapable of capturing and thus specifying what people do in everyday settings and involvements, on their own terms, as they methodically and interactionally make available their thoughts, feelings, and understandings of real and determinate circumstances involving altogether practical choices and actions.

In short, there are key differences between maps and actions, between envisioned interactions and embodied talk-in-interaction, between mappings of and diggings through everyday conversations. Planning for and thinking about upcoming trips are only rarely, and then in glossed version, the same as actually getting on the road and adjusting to the omnipresent and unexpected circumstances that each journey undeniably entails.

The chapters by Sanders (chap. 2, this volume); Leeds-Hurwitz and Sigman, with Sullivan (chap. 4, this volume); and Cronen (chap. 1, this volume) each treats interaction/behavioral ^{productions/conversation} as central analytic resources for gaining access to the consequentiality of

human communication. Each chapter, in its own way, provides transcriptions of actual conversations to clarify, exemplify, and substantiate a priori theories, frameworks, and positions. Sanders offers a neo-rhetorical perspective for understanding institutionally enacted role-identities, Leeds-Hurwitz et al. offer a social communication theory for situating human actions and the structuring of behavioral productions, and Cronen offers Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), in which a grammar of conversation is necessary to generate rules of action and context. Yet, and most important in light of the prior discussion, each spends considerably more time mapping out interactional terrains than digging through actual details of conversational data. All three chapters are more preoccupied with providing an extended theoretical backdrop—stipulating the importance of sense making, conversational organization, and various relationships to the consequences of communication—than with offering evidence of the claims being put forth by turning more directly to the real-time details of actual interactional involvements, and how such details reveal resources employed by speakers and hearers in the routine course of creating, addressing, and resolving interactional problems.

By articulating and laying out what a priori assumptions are brought to the data, direct and situated analyses of interactional materials are postponed in each of the three chapters. Yet having provided readers with such elaborate introductions, setting up and leading readers to data segments, when interactional materials are addressed they appear to offer minimal descriptions of participants' displayed orientations. Therefore, questions can be raised about the inherent "goodness of fit" between, on the one hand, the social world as envisioned via a priori theories and perspectives—replete with deeply motivated definitions, assumptions, tenets, and corollaries focusing on roles, rules, programs, and the like—and, on the other hand, how the ordinary people whose actions are described actually go about engaging one another so as to collaboratively achieve social order. Stated somewhat differently, if there is a goodness of fit between what the bulk of each of these three chapters lays out and actual conversational involvements, they by and large remain unaccounted for in the segments of data provided and analyses made of such interactions.

Because too little is done with data too late (and even then observations drawn from the data examined seem to reflect "templated" versions of a priori concerns "pyramided" onto the details of interaction) discovery *per se* appears short-circuited or preempted, which is yet another sense in which mappings can be said to be more suggestive than definitive. This is not to say, of course, that the conceptual frameworks offered by each of these three chapters is not intuitive, insightful, and appealing in its own right, or that some progress in understanding interactions has not been made. Like Goffman, numerous and thought-provoking notions offer

heuristic alternatives to prior research and theorizing about communication processes and, particularly with this volume, the importance of consequentiality for understanding what is inherently unique about communicative phenomena. Nor is the argument being forwarded that all inquiries must necessarily employ interactional data, and in the same ways, to forward and refine positions regarding the organization of social interaction. Rather, if interactional data are employed to advance claims regarding the practices and patterns of human existence, there is considerable burden on the researcher to make clear what in the data are germane to certain claims and interactional possibilities: What findings emerged from the data and/or were imposed on the data as a result of a priori theorizing? In any case, readers should be in a position to carefully inspect whatever claims and findings are being made. When little or no interactional data are available for inspection, readers should recognize the inherent difficulties and limitations in talking about a social world by utilizing criteria that may be unrecognizable when faced with actual, naturally occurring events and activities on their own merits.

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