

Session 3 – Norms and deviance

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53882 (Monday, 3.30 – 5.30 p.m.)

53883 (Monday, 5.40 – 7.40 p.m.)

21/01/2023 – 24/04/2023

Overview of the session

- 1) Presentation of a classical excerpt in sociology (20 min)
- 2) Discussion by the designated discussants (10-15 min)
- 3) Opening of the discussion to the whole class (15 min)
- 4) Short break (10 min)
- 4) Overview of the second mandatory excerpt (30min)
- 5) Short activity (20 min)



Allocation of presentations and discussions

Date	Session	Text excerpt
24/01	Sociological approaches	
31/01	The individual in social context	Douglas (Mary). Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 2003.
07/02	Norms and deviance	Becker (Howard). Outsiders. 1963.
14/02	Stratification and inequality	Marx (Karl) and Engels (Friedrich). The Communist Manifesto. 1848.
21/02	Identity and identification	Brubaker (Rogers). Trans. Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities. 2016.
07/03	Urban sociology	Venkatesh (Sudhir) and Levitt (Steven). History and disjuncture in the urban American street gang. 2000.

Allocation of presentations and discussions

Date	Session	Text excerpt
14/03	The family	Edin (Kathryn) and Kefalas (Maria). Promises I Can Keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage. 2005.
21/03	Religion	Snow (David) and Machalek (Richard). "The convert as a social type". 1976.
28/03	Education	Khan (Shamus). Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School. 2001.
04/04	Economic sociology	Esping-Andersen (Gøsta). 'Hybrid or Unique?: The Japanese welfare state between Europe and America'. 1997
11/04	Society and the state	Dubois (Vincent). The bureaucrat and the poor. Encounters in French Welfare Offices. 1999.
18/04	Movements and revolutions	McAdam (Douglas). The Biographical Consequences of Activism. 1989.

Presentation of a classical excerpt in sociology

Today's presentation is on:

Becker, H., 1963. "Deviance and the Responses of Others" (p. 8-14), "Marijuana use and social control" (p., 59-78). Outsiders. The Free Press







Erving Goffman

Born on June 11th, 1922. Canadian-born American sociologist, known for his contribution to social theory, and in particular his study of symbolic interaction.

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory “that develops from practical considerations and alludes to the effects of communication and interaction in people to make images and normal implications, for deduction and correspondence with others.”

Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman's major works are *Asylums: Essays on the Condition of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961) and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956).

Smith (John). The Girl Chewing Gum. 1976



The world as a stage.

Goffman (Erving). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. 1959.

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) is based on the thesis that Erving Goffman had just defended on the forms of interpersonal communication in the Shetland Islands in Scotland.

In terms of methodology, it is thus largely based on meticulous ethnographic work carried out by Erving Goffman himself, as well as by students at the University of Chicago, and on literary examples too.

Goffman (Erving). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959.

It attempts at describing, classifying and ordering the ways in which individuals relate to each other on a daily basis, using gestures, words, strategies, etc...

Erving Goffman uses a dramaturgical metaphor for this: the social world is a *theater* and interaction is a *performance*.

To play it well, individuals seek information that allows them to situate their interaction partner(s). Therefore "the individual [has] to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally expresses himself, and the others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by him" (Erving Goffman, 1959).

Goffman (Erving). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959.

For instance, when one is invited to dinner at someone's house for the first time, one participates in a real staging: everyone tries to play the role prescribed by the situation.

On these occasions, the host or hostess takes care of their appearance and the domestic décor (by setting up a table, turning on the lights or music, etc.). Erving Goffman calls this the "façade".

Goffman (Erving). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959.

The physical space is also divided: the living room or dining room, where the performance takes place, constitutes the "stage", and the kitchen, on the other hand, forms a "backstage" (or "posterior region").

It is a place where the performance is suspended, and where guests do not spend most of their time, and sometimes only the closest guests are welcome.

The guests can typically *relax* there (in particular physically), and prepare their performance to come, or complain more freely (e.g., about tiredness or boredom).

Goffman (Erving). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959.

The success of this operation is never a given conclusion.

Everyone tries, during the interactions, to *keep face* (in other words, to make a good impression), but there is always a risk of losing it.

All it takes is one slip-up: loss of muscle control (e.g., stumbling), too little or too much interest in the interaction (forgetting what you wanted to say or taking things too seriously), or any kind of *awkward dramatic direction* (inappropriate setting, appearing or leaving the scene at the wrong time, etc.).

Goffman (Erving). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959.

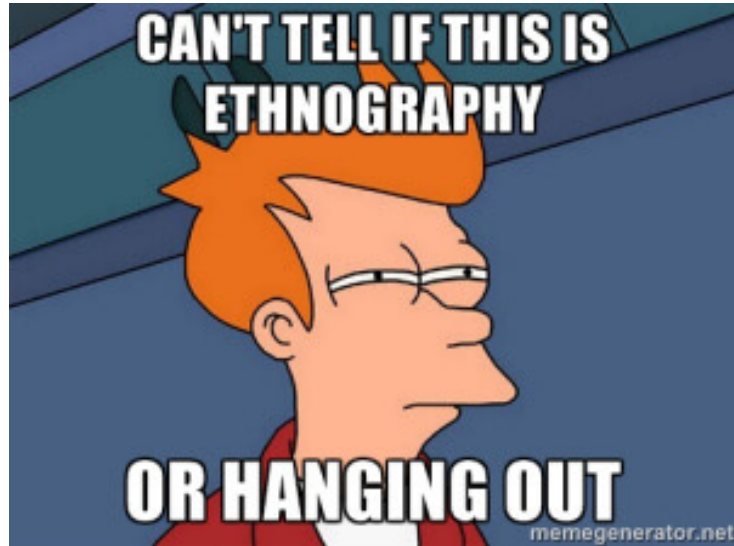
Erving Goffman's analysis in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* is a distanced, clinical and instructive look at the details of interactions between individuals.

It shows the benefits that can be drawn, as a quasi-ethologist, from the simple observation of the most insignificant practices.

Sociological notions such as *status*, *position* or *social situation* can thus be considered through the lens of this theory as models of conduct which systematically needs to be updated by the individuals and performed.

What are the key points of the excerpt?

Methodology – Observation



Methodology – Example of works based on observation studies



What is different about observing people (rather than objects)?

What are the particularities of public space?

Methodology – What is the observation method?

Ethnographic observation is deemed a *qualitative* method in sociology.

With it, the sociologist abandons the ambition of representativeness in favour of attention to socio-physical and spatio-temporal particularities that can typically be compared in greater detail than through the use of quantitative data, hence the importance of justifying the choice of field and its contextualization.

Observation can nonetheless be seen as a mode of production of "quasi-statistics" (Becker, 2003) with forms of systematization, counting and focus on specific data.

Methodology – What is the observation method?

The specificity of ethnographic observation is "the possibility of grasping different dimensions of the social environment at the same time" (Chauvin and Jounin, 2012).

It can highlight variations of modes of expression of a single social fact, e.g., the actions of individuals as well as the discourse of individuals on actions or those of others.

Suppose you are doing an observation in a farmers' market with a focus on the techniques used by farmers to convince clients to buy from their stall. Can you think of varied modes of expression of these techniques?

Methodology – The varied uses of observation

Observation can be **participatory** or not.

Some observation studies are necessarily participatory (due to the negotiation of the sociologist's place and influence of his presence on the respondents).

Other choose to be participatory (to reduce illegitimacy, to ease data collection independent of external collaboration, confinement to a single role, etc.)

Some are non-participant observations (for availability for data collection, due to distrust of respondents, importance of self-presentation, etc.).

Methodology – The varied uses of observation

Observation can be made **covertly** or **overtly**.

Most observation studies are *overt*, meaning that all individuals know that the sociologist is a sociologist doing an observation study (the sociologist's place is gradually being forgotten, and the publicity/extent of the survey is never total).

Some are made *covertly* (due to legal prohibition, moral disapproval; confinement in the role of "participant" to the detriment of data collection, difficult disclosure of the survey, personal tensions, consent of the respondents, etc.)

Methodology – Techniques for observation

How and what to observe?

A (delicate) balance needs to be found between prior research interests and their (re)actualization by the field of investigation, which need to be documented.

Observation is a multi-sensorial observation (gaze, body, hearing) attentive to the speech and actions of the actors in situations.

Methodology – Techniques for observation

How to collect data?

There are multiple collection possibilities: handwritten notes, audio and/or video recordings, etc. that are more or less easy to set up (due to the visibility of the material, the (dis)continuity of the note-taking depending on the situation, sometimes the needed concealment of the note-taking or recording, etc.).

Methodology – Techniques for observation

What is the use of a field diary?

A well-kept field diary is a heavy, disordered and repetitive text, because saturation implies recurrence; it demonstrates epistemic reflexivity on one's own relationship to the field; and includes some ordering of the analysis/narrative, with spaces of "ordered description", "illustrated reasoning", as well as "lengthy commentary".

Methodology – The limits of the observation method

Is the observer condemned to *disturb* the sociologist?

These "disturbances" linked to the presence of the investigator can be used as instruments of knowledge and can be relativized with a relative neutralization of the sociologist's presence (presence over a long period, "disinterested" coexistence, weight of the constraints specific to the environment studied, incognito observer, etc.).

Methodology – The limits of the observation method

Beware of illusions.

One cannot reduce the existence of the actors to the place studied, which most often constitutes only a fraction of the individuals' life.

One cannot claim to explain the behaviours of the respondents on the basis of the sole modelled description of their "roles" in the environment observed.

For next time...

- Read Marx, K., & Engels, F. 2004 [1848]. The Communist Manifesto. Edited and translated by L.M. Findlay. Peterborough ON: Broadview Editions, pp. 61-94
- Read Bourdieu, P. 1979. Distinction. A Social Critique of Judgement. Harvard University Press, p. 114-131
- When reading, remember to note the important elements of the text: question asked by the author(s), (hypo)theses of the author(s), methods used, references, writing style, argumentative construction, etc.
- Prepare the presentation and discussion (if concerned)