

# **Mapping Goffman's Invisible College**

**Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz**

The mediastudies.press *Goffman in the Open* series

# Mapping Goffman's Invisible College

by Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz

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**Published by:**

mediastudies.press

414 W. Broad St.

Bethlehem, PA 18018, USA

**Copy-editing:** Emily Alexander

**Cover design:** Yan Qiu/Natascha Chtena

**Landing page:** [mediastudies.press/mapping-goffman](https://mediastudies.press/mapping-goffman)

Goffman in the Open series

isbn 978-1-951399-38-2 (*print*) | isbn 978-1-951399-34-4 (*pdf*)

isbn 978-1-951399-37-5 (*epub*) | isbn 978-1-951399-35-1 (*html*)

doi 10.64629/3f8575cb.dwb73w6d | lccn 2025939788

*Edition 1 published in August 2025*

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Conclusion

It is time to synthesize what has been learned from the abundance of details presented to this point. I have primarily used archival sources rarely discussed in Goffman studies previously. These chronicle many details about who he was talking or working with, when, and on what subject. My emphasis has been on how connections among colleagues led to a series of collaborative projects of various kinds. Some of these are well known while others have vanished without a trace; some were enormously successful; others, entirely without influence. Ideas do not flourish on their own; like plants they require sustenance and support. A complementary group of colleagues, especially within a supportive university, provides just such sustenance and support, as has been abundantly demonstrated in case after case. This book has been all about Goffman, but the lessons to be learned extend far beyond one scholar. Therefore, some generalizations can be made about multi- and interdisciplinarity, invisible colleges, and conducting historical research.

### *New Understandings About Goffman*

Clearly, in a book where Goffman serves as the focus, the first question to be answered concerns what we now know about him that we did not know previously. This leads to discussion of the ways in which Goffman was one of a strong network of colleagues, both at Penn and beyond.

### Goffman as Colleague

Was Goffman the loner described by others? The short answer is an equivocal “sometimes.” Presumably, his being a loner is part of the story, given that

so many others have highlighted it, but it certainly is not the whole story, and most definitely not the story told in these pages. I would not argue that everyone who has called him a loner is wrong, but rather that what has been known to this point has been incomplete. This book has outlined Goffman's development as a scholar from the time he was a graduate student at the University of Chicago, where he and most of his peer group (based in sociology, anthropology, and psychology) first learned to cross disciplinary boundaries, and consider multi- and interdisciplinary research as something to be taken for granted rather than uncommon; to the National Institute of Mental Health, where he worked closely with psychologists and psychiatrists, and began building a national network of connections; to the University of California, Berkeley, where he was an integral part of both a conference and the Saturday group, as well as several briefer affiliations, again all taking for granted that participants would cross disciplinary lines (especially involving linguistics and anthropology, but also psychology and political science, among others); and most importantly, at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was an integral part of a baker's dozen projects involving overlapping groups of others, some major and others minor, some successful while others were stillborn, from an almost impossible number of disciplines (now adding folklore, communication, and education as central, with many more as peripheral). In addition, details have been presented about his work adjacent to Penn, through either Indiana University or the University of Texas, Austin, participating in still more projects, again all either multi- or interdisciplinary, these based in sociology, semiotics, linguistics, folklore, and anthropology, some small and others large, some successful, and one seriously problematic; and finally, beyond Penn, two more activities which were (again) significantly multidisciplinary. And so, it has become obvious that, even though Goffman "rarely described his intersections with other scholars" (Shuman 2013, 348), many such intersections most certainly existed, a fair number of which have been recounted here. Goffman might best be depicted as the soloist in an orchestra; he was part of a group, and when it came time to perform (and when academics perform, they most often write), he would then present a solo performance. He had the support of the entire orchestra, that is, the peers in his invisible college, but what we see and know the most about are his solo performances, that is, his own presentations and publications.

It is time to bring Goffman's various activities with peers into focus through a few tables synthesizing what has been presented. Here information



will be arranged chronologically, rather than repeating the arrangements in prior chapters, which focused on organizations and participants and their disciplinary affiliations. First to come is a list of all the projects at Penn, both major and minor.

*Table 8.1: Penn Interdisciplinary Projects Involving Goffman, by Date*

<i>Years</i>	<i>Project title</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Success?</i>	<i>Goffman's role</i>
1967	Codes in Context	Conference	Yes	Helped organize
1968–1979	Benjamin Franklin Professors	Honor	Yes	Active member
1969–1974	Center for Urban Ethnography	Research center: grants, fellows, events	Yes	Associate director
1969	Urban Ethnography	Conference (CUE)	Yes	Helped organize
1969–1993	Conduct and Communication	Book series	Yes	Initiator; co-leader
1969, 1971	Semiotic Program	Coordinating group	No	Named as likely
1972–	<i>Language in Society</i>	Journal	Yes	Active, editorial board; contributor
1974–1979	<i>Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication</i>	Journal	Yes	Contributor; minor editorial role
1974–1979?	Language and Interaction Institute	Institute	Minimal	Member
1975	Science of Symbolic Behavior	Coordinating group	No	Named as likely
1976–1982?	Cross-cultural Communication Center	Center/grant proposal	Yes, but new focus	Named as likely
1979–1994	Art and Symbolic Behavior	Guest lectures/conference	Yes	Member
1980–1992	Language, Culture, & Society	Coordinating group	Minimal	Member

Arranging the data in this way makes it easy to see several things: First, and most significant, Goffman was engaged in a surprising number of collaborations just at Penn. He was not typically the leader, although it becomes obvious that he gave substantial effort to the major projects; these were both the most significant and the most successful: the early conference, the book series, the journals, and the research center. Unexpectedly, he was involved in activities at Penn even before arriving on campus officially in 1968. As for the minimally successful activities, or those proposed that never actually happened, the main point to stress here is that the organizers wanted him to be involved, and presumably he wanted that as well. He was involved in organizing a conference (*Codes in Context*) at Penn while still based at Berkeley. He was key to establishing a book series (*Conduct and Communication*), and an important editorial board member of a major journal (*Language in Society*) still in existence today. He helped to write a substantial grant proposal establishing the Center for Urban Ethnography, which funded research, conferences, publications, and fellowships for five years, and which even today lives on as a phantom, decades after the funding ran out. He published a lengthy article (1976a) in a second journal, *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, which then became a major book (1979a). He was included in multiple additional efforts to coordinate courses, presentations, and students across Penn, even though most saw limited success at best. He influenced dozens of students in significant ways they still mention, even though he served as dissertation chair for very few.

Next comes a comparable listing of other interdisciplinary projects highlighted in this book: those with organizers based on other campuses or not attached to a campus at all. In most of these, Goffman was more than just a participant; he was an organizer, or in some other way one of the people responsible for what happened.

Here the most notable events are all conferences, several of which Goffman helped to organize, not an activity typically mentioned for him by others; the one publication was not something he was responsible for getting accepted. But he was part of a national commission which remembered his contributions from twenty years before and clearly attended to his words, evident especially through the quotes from his publications used in the resulting report. And he was part of MAP, a long-term collaborative research project which eventually did result in publications but ultimately failed, in part due to his strong objections to the group's data collection techniques.

Yet he maintained friendly relations with the organizer (Grimshaw) and many other participants despite his withdrawal.

*Table 8.2: Other Interdisciplinary Projects Involving Goffman, by Date*

<i>Years</i>	<i>Project title</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Success?</i>	<i>EG role</i>
1964	Strategic Interaction and Conflict	Conference	Yes	Helped organize
1968	Interaction Ethology	Conference	Yes	Co-organizer
1969	Nonverbal Dimensions	Conference	Yes	Helped organize
1970–1982	<i>Working Papers in Sociolinguistics</i>	Publication	Yes	Peripheral member
1971	Committee for the Study of Incarceration	National commission	Yes	Active member
1972	Ethnography of Speaking	Conference	Yes	Participant
1972	Sociolinguistics: Current Trends & Prospects	Conference	Yes	Plenary
1973–1994	Multiple Analysis Project	Research project	Minimal	Active member; left early
1974	[Goffman/Sacks/Goodwins/Jefferson project]	Grant proposal	No	Participant in proposal
1975	Comparative Ethnographic Analysis	Conference	Yes	Participant
1977	Colloquium on Human Ethology	Conference	Yes	Participant
1980	Clever Hans	Conference	Yes	Participant

These lists show that Goffman met informally with colleagues across multiple disciplines on each of his campuses, helped to organize and coordinate not one but multiple conferences (including one at Berkeley, one at Penn before he arrived, one in New York, and another in Amsterdam), and was included in others, both well-known and rarely mentioned. He also participated in



Table 8.3: Results of Projects at Penn Involving Goffman, by Date

Year	Activity	EG as organizer	EG as presenter	EG as carper	Book	EG as author	EG article	EG as editor
1967	Codes in Context	x		x				
1969	Center for Urban Ethnography	x			x			
1969– 1982	Conduct and Communication	x			x	x		x
1972– 1982	<i>Language in Society</i>						x	x
1974– 1982	<i>Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication</i>						x	x

panels at major international conventions (surprisingly early as chair, but more frequently as discussant, or “carper,” as he put it [Feb 27, 1979, TS]), had an article published in a journal special issue (1964a), and published chapters in edited collections (1957b, 1957c, 1958, 1961c, 1961d, 1964b, 1966, 1979c), all demonstrating various levels of collaboration with and connection to colleagues, even though all were sole authored. Goffman was clearly an active player in the many group endeavors examined to this point, even though his role as a team player and valued colleague is hardly what he is known best for today. In fact, quite the opposite. I have tried to expand our understanding of Goffman’s contributions to include a well-documented series of positive, productive, and surprisingly frequent interactions with overlapping clusters of colleagues. Overall, taking multiple stories into account should permit a more complex and complete understanding of who Goffman was, and how he interacted with others as he contributed to our understanding of the interaction order that was his focus.

Another way of viewing what has been demonstrated to this point about Goffman’s connections with others would be to look at the “productive results” so valued by administrators such as Meyerson.<sup>1</sup> Here the questions

to be asked include: Were there conferences where ideas were presented to others beyond the initial group, and, if so, what was Goffman's role? Were there resulting publications (books or articles), since that would again extend the influence? And if there were, was Goffman one of the authors, or did he take an editorial role?

This table includes only major projects at Penn because none of the minor projects had any resulting publications (so far as I have found), and the few conferences from one of them (Art and Symbolic Behavior) did not, in the end, involve Goffman in any role yet documented. Of the more successful projects, Goffman helped to organize two conferences<sup>2</sup> and a book series and played the role of carper at one of the conferences. Two of these projects resulted in the publication of one or more books; Goffman did not have a chapter in the one book resulting from a Center for Urban Ethnography conference, but he did publish several books in the series he proposed and co-edited, *Conduct and Communication*. In addition, he published an article in each journal, played a significant editorial role in the book series and one journal (*Language in Society*), and a minor editorial role in the other (*Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*). In sum, this table documents a small number of projects resulting in conferences and publications to share what was learned. While there were few such projects, they were remarkably influential far beyond Penn.

Next, to consider the results of activities when the organizer was based somewhere other than Penn (thus combining what was discussed previously as "Penn adjacent" or "beyond Penn"). In addition, many of the conferences briefly mentioned in earlier chapters (especially those "Before Penn") also seem appropriate to include, as they demonstrate his continued willingness to present his work, or to become involved in a working conference designed to further some concept.

When the result of a conference was a book, "EG as author" means he had a chapter in that book; otherwise, "EG article" means he published an article related to what he presented at the event. For conferences, it seems worth noting when he served as organizer, as chair, as presenter, or as carper (discussant or respondent). Goffman was one of the organizers in four of these conferences, and organizer of a panel once; he served as panel chair once, presented a paper sixteen times, and he took the role of carper thirteen times. Obviously, when not presenting himself, being the one to formally respond was his preference. (And others wanted him to do this because he was particularly good at it, often moving far beyond just asking a few

Table 8.4: Results of Projects Outside Penn Involving Goffman, by Date

Year	Activity	EG as organizer	EG as chair	EG as presenter	EG as carper	Results: Book	EG as author	EG article
1956	Macy Conference on Group Processes			x		x	x	
1956	Socio- Environmental Aspects of Patient Care			x		x	x	
1957	American Sociological Association			x				x
1957	Symposium on Preventive and Social Psychiatry			x		x	x	
1960	American Sociological Association		x					
1962	Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease			x		x	x	
1962	Conference on Paralinguistics and Kinesics					x		
1963	American Anthropological Association			x		x	x	
1964	Strategic Interaction and Conflict	x		x	x	x	x	
1967	American Anthropological Association			x				
1967	American Sociological Association			x				
1968	Interaction Ethology	x		x	x			

*Table 8.4: Results of Projects Outside Penn Involving Goffman, by Date (cont'd)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>EG as organizer</i>	<i>EG as chair</i>	<i>EG as presenter</i>	<i>EG as carper</i>	<i>Results: Book</i>	<i>EG as author</i>	<i>EG article</i>
1969	Nonverbal Dimensions	x		x	x			
1971	American Sociological Association				x			
1971	Committee for the Study of Incarceration					x		
1971	Conference on Visual Anthropology				x			
1972	Ethnography of Speaking				x	x		
1972	Conference on Visual Anthropology	x (session only)						
1972	Sociolinguistics			x		x		
1972	American Sociological Association			x				
1973– 1975	Multiple Analysis Project					x		
1974	NWAVE III <sup>3</sup>			x				x
1975	Comparative Ethnographic Analysis <sup>4</sup>							
1976	American Anthropological Association				x			
1977	American Anthropological Association				x			
1977	American Sociological Association			x	x			
<i>Year</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>EG as organizer</i>	<i>EG as chair</i>	<i>EG as presenter</i>	<i>EG as carper</i>	<i>Results: Book</i>	<i>EG as author</i>	<i>EG article</i>

Table 8.4: Results of Projects Outside Penn Involving Goffman, by Date (cont'd)

1977	Colloquium on Human Ethology	x			x			
1978	American Anthropological Association				x			
1978	American Sociological Association				x			
1979	Chicago Linguistic Society			x				
1980	Clever Hans				x	x		

questions to drawing broader conclusions.) Books resulted from twelve of these events: Goffman published a total of seven chapters in six of them (and multiple quotes from his publications are included in the group-authored book for the Committee for the Study of Incarceration) and twice published a conference paper from this list as a journal article (and as part of a later book of his own multiple times). He played no editorial role in any of these activities. Thus, in the non-Penn activities, he typically helped organize events, presented his own work, or served as carper. However, as the years went on (especially after arrival at Penn), far less often did he bother to write up a paper for inclusion in the resulting book, presumably as his reputation for writing his own books grew, and it made more sense to publish his ideas in those. In fact, most of his early book chapters or articles were later integrated into one or another of his own books, as has been mentioned when each was first described.

In addition to what has been covered in these pages, it is important to point out that Goffman gave a lot of invited presentations, and was invited to a lot of additional conferences, both in the US and Europe. Those activities already have been covered by others (most clearly in Winkin 2022a, 2022b), and so there is no need for them to be listed here. But they should be understood as background information; they significantly expand the number of conference and other presentations beyond those already listed, making clear that he had international connections, not only domestic connections within the US.

The primary concern in these pages has been with Goffman’s time at Penn. Clearly, he was not typically the primary organizer; that was his role

only once, for the book series *Conduct and Communication*. But he was a valued partner in all the major projects at Penn, and an active participant in many of the minor projects, including the Benjamin Franklin Professors, even for political activities, although he is not known for those—quite the opposite. And, of course, Penn was not unique. In other cases presented in these pages, he again took on substantive roles, ranging from co-organizing conferences to speaking up for his “constituency” (Sacks and Schegloff) as Grimshaw put it, as a member of a research team trying to help develop the new field of sociolinguistics. The connection with Sacks (and Schegloff) when they aligned on their assumptions for data collection during MAP provides evidence contradicting another common assumption about Goffman—that “Sacks’ relationship with Goffman effectively ended when Goffman refused to sign-off on Sacks’ PhD in 1964” (Hoey and Rawls 2022, 371). The connection documented in their joint NEH application (apparently with Goffman as the lead, since Grimshaw refers to it as the Goffman proposal), tying him together with not only Sacks but also Jefferson and both Goodwins, provides further evidence of continued connection. Across the various activities, it is evident that Goffman was rarely someone to be overlooked in a group, that people paid a great deal of attention to what he said, that he was often the one who served as discussant, synthesizing what had been said to that point, and even after an event ended, thinking carefully about next steps (as clearly demonstrated in his letters to Sebeok after the Interaction Ethology conference). At least some of the time, his was the voice of reason when someone was upset, as with Hymes.

Goffman was an uncommonly graceful writer, as has been widely acknowledged in discussions of his books, and the same grace (as well as humor) appears again and again in excerpts from letters he wrote to various friends and colleagues. That is at least one reason why he was valued as a group member. Jacobsen and Kristiansen have critiqued Goffman for being “apparently difficult to work with and to be around” and have suggested that this may be why his work is “exclusively one-author productions” (2015, 25). But sole-authored publications do not mean he never talked about ideas with others, for he clearly did, and often, typically in ways that were cute or funny or gently teasing but always working to build and maintain affiliations with at least some others, if not everyone. Prior chapters have documented repeated efforts to maintain friendships even after disagreements (as with Grimshaw) or inability to accept a manuscript for publication (as with Sherzer) or unwillingness to over-commit himself (as with Sebeok). Long-



term friendships and working relationships—primarily with Birdwhistell, Hymes, Labov, Szwed, and Worth at Penn, but also Hughes from Chicago; Schneider, Cicourel, Gumperz, and Ervin-Tripp from Berkeley; Sebeok and Grimshaw from Indiana; and Sherzer from Texas; and many others who have been mentioned more briefly—have all been illustrated in these pages. Each of these people is a major scholar in their own right, and all shared enough basic assumptions with Goffman that they worked hard to maintain connections, whether at conferences, dinners, visits, or through multi- or interdisciplinary projects, both large and small. The fact that so many people show up repeatedly (as when Steiner and Meyer were Benjamin Franklin Professors but also part of minor projects; or when Goodenough had his office in the same building as Goffman and also was part of so many minor projects) makes clear the number of overlapping clusters of which Goffman was part, mostly at Penn, but also elsewhere. And there are undoubtedly more that I have missed.

## Goffman and Sociolinguistics

In the context of this analysis of Goffman as part of an invisible college, an obvious question to ask is whether Goffman's network only included Chicago, NIMH, Berkeley, and Penn (and more distantly Indiana and Texas) or whether he belonged to some broader scholarly community, beyond a single campus (where, after all, it is relatively easy to connect with peers, even those based in different departments). The answer is that, in the field of sociolinguistics as it developed through the 1960s and 1970s, Goffman was in on the ground floor, knew all the major players well, and was frequently counted as an important member. The typical descriptions of Goffman do not portray him as a sociolinguist, yet he was part of the small group of scholars (most especially Gumperz, Ervin-Tripp, Hymes, Labov, Grimshaw, and Ferguson) trying to find ways to bring the study of language and society together into a new research area they most often named sociolinguistics. In addition, at least once he referred to himself as an "amateur sociolinguist" (Goffman to McGuigan, Jan 3, 1980, RB). Beyond his own opinion, there is a reasonable argument to be made for including Goffman in this group, given that he was a part of things from the very early days, even to the point that his dissertation can be understood as foreshadowing the move into sociolinguistics, as Winkin (2022e) argues. Specifically, he was included in an early journal special issue in 1964, which was all about establishing sociolinguistics as an approach. He was invited to the 1966 meeting at the home of William Bright, along with

many of those from the Saturday group at Berkeley, an event credited with helping to establish sociolinguistics as a distinct approach.<sup>5</sup> And he was a visitor to Ervin-Tripp's SSRC Committee on Sociolinguistics—sponsored summer workshops in sociolinguistics in 1968, participating in analysis of visual data. He presented a plenary and was cited as a relevant source by multiple participants in their own presentations in the 1972 Georgetown University Round Table on Sociolinguistics, another event organized by the Committee on Sociolinguistics, one intended to evaluate the state of the field.<sup>6</sup> By the fact that the organizers wanted him to present a plenary we learn that they must have considered his work not only relevant but central. He served essential editorial roles in managing a book series (Conduct and Communication) and a journal (*Language in Society*) on the topic. As Hymes said at one point in a 1972 letter to Sherzer, "Since 1963 at the very least, that is, a decade, we [Hymes and Gumperz] have considered what he [Goffman] does as integral to what we do."<sup>7</sup> In turn, in *Frame Analysis*, Goffman acknowledged: "Dell Hymes, William Labov, and Joel Sherzer provided a sociolinguistic environment" (1974, vii). Grimshaw provides a definition of sociolinguistics which makes obvious why Goffman would have been interested in sociolinguistics as it was developing: "how talk gets used to accomplish social ends in (primarily) face-to-face interaction" (1998, 444). The overlap with Goffman's research concerns here is substantial.

When Tannen (a Gumperz student) prepared an annotated bibliography of sociolinguistics in 1978, her description of Goffman's 1959 book begins, "Goffman is a giant. His theories of interaction inform everything anyone has written in the last two decades about interaction, whether they know it or not (most know it)" (31). In 1996, discussing what they term "sociological sociolinguistics," Schegloff, Ochs, and Thompson, highlight Goffman as one of the two most important figures (with Garfinkel as the other). Grimshaw, by the way, is barely mentioned—not much of a reward for his twenty years of effort guiding MAP—but the issue was theoretical contribution, not effort. Kendall makes a case that not only is Goffman's influence evident in sociolinguistics, but it "has increased over the decades" (2011, 120). Copland and Creese (2015) add Goffman (as well as Fred Erickson) to their list of metatheorists.<sup>8</sup>

The Saturday group at Berkeley became an important part of the history of sociolinguistics, and Goffman was an integral part of that story as a member nearly from the start (Bucholtz and Hall 2008). Gumperz highlights the significance of the SSRC Committee on Sociolinguistics, on which he,

Hymes, Labov, and Grimshaw all served overlapping terms, along with Bright and Ferguson,<sup>9</sup> writing in 1997 that: “Although our theoretical interests differed, we all shared the premise that sociolinguistic research of all kinds must build on the ethnographer’s insights into the everyday life of speech communities” (115). Later, of course, the Committee on Sociolinguistics developed and then supported the MAP project in which Goffman played a significant role, as well as supporting not one but several conferences in which he participated.

## Nomenclature Matters: Sociolinguistics vs. Interaction

Part of the reason Goffman is not always considered relevant to the development of sociolinguistics is likely the considerable divergence in the overlapping names for what he and others studied in the 1960s and 1970s. They invented vocabulary as they went along, as happens in the early days of any theoretical approach, and so the names for what they studied kept changing, from sociolinguistics (Labov and Grimshaw) to urban ethnography (Szwed), from the ethnography of speaking (Hymes) to interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz), from codes in context (Worth) to communication (Birdwhistell). In his turn, Goffman called what he did the interaction order, or communication conduct (both as early as his dissertation [Goffman 1953]), sometimes interaction ethology (as in the conference in Amsterdam in 1970), or a handful of other names (as in his various books), occasionally calling himself an urban ethnographer (as in Verhoeven 1993). Others tried out further terms: semiotics (Sebeok and Hymes), language and interaction (Labov), symbolic behavior (Goodenough), cross-cultural communication (Labov and Gelman), language, culture, and society (Goodenough and Hymes), or ethnolinguistics (Hymes and Sankoff). As Hymes has pointed out, many of these are “bridges” (1983b, 189); that is, they are designed to help connect what otherwise would be viewed as discrete topics or disciplines. Some of his examples at that point were sociolinguistics, ethnography of speaking, and philosophy of language. As Labov referred to it in 1968—this thing, “whatever we’re doing”<sup>10</sup>—there was a sense that they were making it up as they went along, and indeed they were, following the work rather than the label, wherever it led, to paraphrase the comment Hymes made to Worth about Goffman in 1969.<sup>11</sup> Worth called what they were doing “this kind of work.”<sup>12</sup> Hymes said that “no one name serves.”<sup>13</sup> Goffman acknowledged that “the study of face-to-face interaction in natural settings doesn’t yet have an adequate name” (1967, 1). Despite the lack of final agreement on a single

cover term to refer to everything they were doing, most especially at the point when they were busy inventing it, the point to remember is that they still had no difficulty in thinking the various approaches they were taking should be viewed as having substantial overlaps. Fifty years later, there are almost as many names available, including sociolinguistics, linguistic ethnography, language and social interaction, or communication, describing overlapping areas studied by later generations of researchers. Whatever its name, Goffman was one of those helping outline what needed study and how it could be studied, not just at one university, but nationally (and, to a lesser extent, internationally).

When one idea failed to be taken up, a different proposal was put forward, with a slightly different emphasis, and overlapping membership; when one succeeded on a small scale, a more ambitious effort was deemed justified. Thus do we see how success is achieved: through small steps, repeated connections, and continuous effort. Looking only at these projects involving Goffman, it becomes quite clear: In the 1950s, he conducted his own research, presented at conferences, and began publishing; in the 1960s, he moved from just presenting to helping to organize conferences, he joined first one then several multi- or interdisciplinary groups, and published chapters influenced by discussions with others, as well as much more on his own; in the 1970s and early 1980s, he took a far more active role in a wider range of interdisciplinary projects, continued presenting at and helping to organize some conferences, helped to write a major grant proposal and to coordinate the resulting research center, moved from publishing his own work to having editorial roles with two journals and a book series, and was chosen to join a national committee that closed the circle, having more to do with his research in the 1950s than anything later. Overall, it is the public presentations and resulting publications which make the informal gatherings worthy of attention; these were not just people sitting around chatting, but scholars discussing ideas, influencing one another, and then setting out their ideas on a national stage, publishing as a way to expand the conversation to others who did not have the good luck to be present as they developed approaches that we today take for granted. The Committee on Sociolinguistics made explicit what everyone eventually learned: The goal was not just to conduct research, but to present at conferences, and move from there to publications, so that ideas might be shared with as large a group of potentially interested peers as possible. Hymes provided an early and explicit warning to the committee:

Sociolinguistics might turn out to have been for the 1960s, what paralinguistics and kinesics were for the 1950s. The focus of attention, even the cynosure, for a few years, of many people and the work of some excellent people—but a field which acquired no steady succession of advances in method and results, and replacement of leaders. Or, sociolinguistics may more resemble psycholinguistics, becoming subject to severe reformulations, but sustained.<sup>14</sup>

As clarification for those unfamiliar with the history of kinesics and paralinguistics, they were invented, but never fully developed (Leeds-Hurwitz 1987; Leeds-Hurwitz and Kendon 2021), despite the 1962 conference on that topic organized by Sebeok and attended by Birdwhistell and Goffman (and Bateson and Mead, among others). Largely due to the funding provided by the committee and the support it received from scholars at Penn (and Berkeley, Indiana, and Texas), sociolinguistics did, in fact, fully develop. And Goffman was part of most of the major stages in that development. The terminology one chooses to describe one's research today often depends on disciplinary training and intellectual home; the large pie of potential topics has been divided up again into many smaller pieces.

### *Multi- and Interdisciplinarity*

The key to understanding most of the stories told in this book, but especially what happened at Penn during Goffman's residence there, can be found in the related topics of multi- and interdisciplinarity. The positive result of either approach is the ability to bring together people having shared interests in order to develop new concepts, approaches, methods, etc. As Hymes explained to Worth already in 1969, "It is not possible to develop these lines of work, to meet these needs, within existing departmental alignments. The kinds of training and interest required are distributed across such alignments."<sup>15</sup> He was talking about the need to "succeed in making communicative conduct, verbal and nonverbal, an integrated focus of attention" and "understanding the genesis, meaning, and use of symbolic forms in people's lives." These were certainly interests shared with Goffman as well as all the others in this network. This was not only true at Penn, but also at Berkeley: The Saturday group was largely developed by people finding sympathetic others *outside* their own departmental homes. Hymes at least repeated on multiple occasions that he hated departmental structures; he wanted to focus on ideas, not administration (which makes it even more ironic that he wrote so many letters to department chairs in anthropology, folklore, linguistics, or deans

in Arts and Sciences or communication, addressing administrative issues, and especially that he became a dean himself.)

The negative side to working with people having significantly different training and assumptions is the very real possibility of such differences causing misunderstandings, confusions, and conflicts. And, in fact, some of the stories told in these pages report on noteworthy difficulties between scholars both within and across disciplines. Finding or creating a new structure with a different set of people was often the proposed solution. Considering just a few of those at Penn, Fought periodically complained to Hymes about politics in the linguistics department;<sup>16</sup> Szwed complained to him about the folklore department;<sup>17</sup> and, of course, Hymes left anthropology over a tenure decision. Most of the minor projects at Penn were at least partially intended to expand the networks of participants so they would have clear ties to those outside their own departments.

Multidisciplinarity is one obvious solution. As people who share research interests connect across administrative borders, they invent multidisciplinary projects. In addition, there is a strong theoretical reason for introducing interdisciplinarity: There are often gaps in terms of coverage between disciplines, and interdisciplinary work is explicitly intended and designed to fill those gaps. As Hymes points out, "The flourishing of a hybrid term such as sociolinguistics reflects a gap in the disposition of established disciplines with respect to reality" (1972b, 17). In fact, his own phrase, "the ethnography of speaking" (quickly changed to "the ethnography of communication"<sup>18</sup>), pointed to just such a gap in what was then being studied: Anthropologists studied culture, leaving language to linguists, while linguists studied linguistic structure, but not use of language, so no one was studying language in use. It is reasonable to assume that Goffman saw himself as studying the larger topic of social interaction, which included, but was not limited to, the use of language in society.

Obviously, there are multiple barriers to interdisciplinarity, with some disciplines fitting together more easily or gracefully than others. The disciplines most often combined at Penn were anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, folklore, and communication, all of which have substantial overlaps in terms of topics and key concepts, theories and methods. But, depending on the project, faculty members from another dozen disciplines were brought into discussions as it was understood they also would have something relevant to contribute. Just as the role of language in social life was essential to many of the projects in these pages, so was the extension of



interaction to include the nonverbal (Birdwhistell) and the visual (Worth); today this larger understanding is typically termed multimodality (and studied by scholars from not one but a range of disciplines). Similarly, certain topics were of concern to numerous scholars across disciplines, such as narrative analysis, cultural identity, or performance, and so collaboration across borders seemed not only possible and reasonable but obvious.

In describing his own involvement in interdisciplinary groups—specifically focusing on that moment in the Berkeley/UCLA meetings in the 1960s involving Garfinkel, Cicourel, Labov, Schegloff, Sacks, and himself—Gumperz points out something rarely noticed: The conversations involved “people . . . who aren’t usually grouped together . . . where people would come because they were interested in some of the same things, and we weren’t necessarily friends. . . . creating a field is partly a matter of creating social networks of communicating individuals” (in Murray, 2013, 9–10). So, the first essential element is a network of people sharing common theory or research interests; they do not have to be friends, only to talk with one another about ideas. In fact, as has been shown, Goffman did become friends with at least some of the scholars described in these pages, and he valued those friendships, even to the point of putting them above theoretical or methodological disagreements. While friendship is thus not a requirement for interdisciplinary work, it may become a result, as demonstrated over and over here. Hymes told Dean Gregorian in 1974: “As far as I am concerned, the only thing that matters is intellectual growth and vibrancy; I want to be where that is and help it to exist. And that always seems to lead across departmental boundaries.” And then he asked whether the new organizational structure just put into place at Penn would be able “to treat research, knowledge, scholars, as wholes, such as they really are,” because that was of such importance to him. And it proved to be equally important to the others. He concluded that universities must solve the problem of ensuring their faculty “keep intellectually alive.”<sup>19</sup> The projects in these pages, whether major or minor, whether based at Penn or elsewhere, whether successful or not, did exactly that by providing a context within which scholars could meet and discuss ideas with others sharing common interests, crossing traditional (departmental) boundaries. Goffman was one of those who transcended disciplines—in his case, from his PhD all the way through his books and final papers—as has been made clear across all the chapters of this book.

As Birdwhistell once pointed out to me (while discussing the Macy Foundation conferences in the 1950s, but he clearly intending the comment to apply to other contexts as well):

You have to remember that this was a much smaller world then—many fewer people and most of us knew or knew about one another. . . . This is part of the ferment out of which Macy was born, bringing together specialists who knew (and were recognized in) their own field and who were interested in ideas coming from other disciplines. *This is important*: People well framed in *particular* disciplines got together as equals [emphasis in original]. It was exciting and productive.<sup>20</sup>

Birdwhistell was not the only one to think this way. Advancing knowledge often works best when we collaborate with those who come from a different starting point yet share some goals and assumptions. Goffman worked far more often and far more closely with multiple peers based in disciplines other than his own academic home of sociology. More scholars should consider doing the same. And more universities should encourage and facilitate opportunities to do just that.

## Lessons From a Failed Project

When first envisioned in 1973, the Multiple Analysis Project was intended to bring together linguists and sociologists through the study of the same data using different approaches, as a way of learning which approach would be most useful as they were developing the new area of sociolinguistics. When MAP failed, that larger project of reaching agreement as to methodology failed as well, although certainly it was not the only reason for this. As Shuy noted in 1990:

The fondly hoped-for coming together of linguistics, sociology and anthropology, a desire which dominated much of the discussion of the leaders in the mid-sixties, can today hardly be seen to have occurred. . . . It is apparent that today the same general laments that were voiced in the sixties continue to be with us. . . . It appears that the high hopes that academics have for cross-disciplinary intermingling is somewhat overly optimistic. (204–5)

The question is whether, several decades later, this has changed. It does seem that sociolinguistics is strong and accepted, but mostly it is linguists who view it as an obvious topic, with far fewer sociologists choosing it as their primary focus. I would disagree about the last part of Shuy's comment, however: The lack of success of this one project does not accurately predict the failure of other "cross-disciplinary interminglings"—as demonstrated

by the success stories also told in this book. We must learn from this failure, just as we learn from the success of so many of the other projects.

Grimshaw pointed out a truism that has not changed: “Interdisciplinary research has a particular excitement for people like me who as mature scholars suddenly discover that data, theories, and methods from previously unfamiliar disciplines illuminate problems in their own” (1981, 360). So, in addition to appealing to junior scholars looking for a more comfortable intellectual home, it also appeals to senior scholars open to new ideas. Grimshaw proposed the experiment that turned into MAP in good faith, as an interesting way to learn which methods were most likely to prove effective as sociolinguistics was only just being invented. He took Hymes’s goal of “a unified theory of sociolinguistic description” seriously and hoped that MAP would help sociolinguistics “to achieve theoretical coherence” (362–63). However, that was not to be, despite his valiant efforts to keep the project on track and bring it to a successful close.

Just as Hymes earlier was quoted pointing out that the Saturday group at Berkeley was made up of marginal department members looking for kindred souls, he also pointed out that the same was true for sociolinguistics more broadly: “An important attraction in the early years of sociolinguistics was that a number of individuals, interested in its use, were marginal to their official affiliations. The idea of there being a field for studying the use—in ways relevant to social life and social problems—brought them together” (1997, 125). Hymes goes on to specifically name Goffman and Labov, as well as Basil Bernstein, William Bright, Susan Ervin-Tripp, John Gumperz, Charles Ferguson, Joshua Fishman, Einar Haugen, Roger Shuy, and Wallace E. Lambert, as examples. At least some members of MAP likely felt a similar marginalization. Hymes has also suggested that “the postwar thrust toward a unified social science, among the relatively much smaller number of social scientists, had not yet faded” (125), yet another reason for working with colleagues beyond a single discipline. The goal of a unified approach documented in Grinker (1956) and Pike ([1954] 1967) had been a topic of discussion during Goffman’s years at Chicago and was clearly of interest to many in the 1950s and 1960s, and so it may be credited with some influence over the move to interdisciplinarity especially at Chicago and Penn but occasionally elsewhere as well. As the earlier discussion of MAP shows, however, more care is required to ensure the success of an interdisciplinary project, for all the reasons outlined there. Ideas must reach people at just the right moment, and the stars must align: People must have overlapping

interests, and time and funding for their work such that project goals and participation can remain consistent. Leadership must have both the requisite organizational skills and knowledge. These are all essential elements. While it may be easier to fail when reaching across disciplines, whether for multi- or interdisciplinary agendas, this does not mean the attempt is not worth the effort, as demonstrated most clearly by the series of successful major projects at Penn.

## Penn and Interdisciplinarity

As a university, Penn has formally highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of the campus and faculty for decades, at least from 1971, when the university officially complained that their American Council on Education evaluation ignored “a number of innovative graduate programs of an interdisciplinary nature for which Pennsylvania is widely known,”<sup>21</sup> up to and including today’s Penn Integrates Knowledge (PIK) Professors, who “hold joint appointments in two or more schools and exemplify excellence in multidisciplinary scholarship and learning.”<sup>22</sup> (In fact, PIK Professors are a likely descendant of the Benjamin Franklin Professorships; despite no mention of this in official documentation, it would otherwise be an odd coincidence to have two such similar programs at the same university.<sup>23</sup>) In a statement of campus principles released in 2024, Penn has reiterated the significance of interdisciplinarity, starting the list with “Accelerate interdisciplinary pursuits” (Prendergast 2024). Describing how this worked at a personal level, Darnell explains:

The University of Pennsylvania during my graduate studies from 1965 to 1969 was a disciplinary melting pot, a seething cauldron of ideas in which some faculty from anthropology (Dell Hymes, David Sapir), folklore (Dan Ben-Amos, Ken Goldstein), linguistics (Bill Labov), American studies (Charles Rosenberg), sociology (Erving Goffman), and the Annenberg School of Communication (Sol Worth) came together with graduate students regularly to share ideas. (2021, x)

The fact that Darnell has written a book titled *Invisible Genealogies* (2001a) makes clear that her concern is comparable to mine here—to show connections not yet widely recognized by others.

It is not by chance that Penn was the primary site of Goffman’s invisible college. Winkin points out in his discussion of Bourdieu and Goffman that they shared moral values, including “a total commitment to hard work” (2022g, 403), an evaluation which could equally be made of virtually all the scholars mentioned in these pages. Those of us who were present at Penn

during any of these projects, who took courses or otherwise connected with any of these scholars, understood well how fantastic our experiences were and, once we moved on to other universities, also came to understand how unique our experience at Penn had been. Because they had first been part of an uncommonly interesting and active and creative group of colleagues at Berkeley, Goffman and Hymes deliberately set out to create another such network at Penn, and they succeeded to an astonishing extent. After all, how many other universities have faculty proposing “a comprehensive and radical reorganization of the whole intellectual map, closer to a geological upheaval in the contours of a continent than a mere re-allocation of national territories”<sup>24</sup> as the Center for the Study of Art and Symbolic Behavior proposed to bring about?

That is not to say that everyone was always happy with all the others. Penn was a paradise compared to many other places, but even in paradise there can be conflicts. With so much going on, and so many people in so many departments involved, despite the enormous number of long—sometimes absurdly long—letters they exchanged (absolutely the opposite of today’s emails and texts, but far easier to document after the fact), even central characters occasionally missed telling one another what they were up to. An example is that both Grimshaw and Gumperz gave colloquia in linguistics in 1980, yet Hymes, who probably knew both of them better than anyone else on campus, was not informed of their visits by Labov, who invited them. The result is that Hymes wrote a cranky letter: “I’d very much appreciate whatever can be done to get word to us [GSE] about visitors. . . . It’s embarrassing to learn just today that Allen Grimshaw was here last week. As you know, he’s an old friend. . . . And I feel badly about learning about John [Gumperz]’s being invited too late to arrange to see him.”<sup>25</sup> Labov quickly apologized and blamed the lack of secretarial help.<sup>26</sup> But this sort of inadvertent missed opportunity is exactly what so many of the minor projects were intended to avoid. The network of people sharing common interests had grown so large by the mid-1970s that it became easy to omit notifying someone who would be interested in a visit, a lecture, a course offering, or other activity, and not even realize it.

That so many scholars were willing to move beyond disciplinary borders, when that was no more typical of academia in the 1960s or 1970s than it is today, is noteworthy. (The point here is not to say that other universities never establish campus-wide committees bringing together faculty from several departments, but those are typically about pragmatic matters, such as

curriculum design, rather than research investigations resulting in publications.) Near the end of his academic career, Hymes explained the centrality of his own willingness to combine disciplines to his own professional life: “As someone with a degree in linguistics, teaching in anthropology (and with affiliations in folklore), I could not be other than interdisciplinary” (1997, 125), and this was equally true for the other major actors, as well as some of the minor actors, in this story. During his time at Penn from 1968 to 1982, Goffman was surrounded by a group of uncommonly bright, creative, and productive peers interested in collaborating with him. Penn was an interdisciplinary heaven, even if not all the attempts to create something new were successful. Ideas need fertile ground, and Penn certainly provided that for all scholars, central and peripheral, and for students as well. The lesson here is that the institutional structure and assumptions matter, not just ideas; one person with a single good idea cannot hold a candle to a cluster of brilliant people sharing their ideas and helping one another to develop and expand upon them. At Penn, Goffman was surrounded by one small circle, and then a much larger circle beyond that, made up of just such brilliant scholars and their many good ideas. It is probably not surprising that “when Penn alumni left the campus, we discovered that our professors were the scholars everyone else was reading” (Leeds-Hurwitz and Sigman 2010, 261n1); in fact, our professors were frequently several steps ahead of others, and part of that was likely due to their interdisciplinary conversations, where they could work out how to most productively and creatively move ahead.

Everything I saw, experienced, or read at Penn indicated that not only multi- but also interdisciplinarity was integral to the campus, to the point where I took courses in six departments; this was perhaps a bit extreme, but everyone I knew took at least some courses in departments other than the one in which they were officially enrolled. So, it was surprising to discover a study reporting the results of a survey conducted in 1967 which found students complaining of “isolation that existed at Penn between departments and between graduate students of different departments.”<sup>27</sup> There are several possible explanations. Perhaps what was an issue in 1967 might have been resolved by the time I entered Penn in 1975, but this does not ring true, given the comments of graduate students in the 1960s, such as Darnell or Sherzer, describing the way students and faculty across several departments spent time together. Or perhaps some of us participated in courses with clusters of Penn faculty who collaborated themselves and brought their students into those collaborations in various ways, but others were not so lucky.



That seems more likely, but it still does not fit with Penn's explicit emphasis on interdisciplinarity, which appears to be campus-wide and decades old. In fact, in 1978, a supplement to the *Almanac*, titled "A Commitment to Interdisciplinarity," summarizes the result of the 1974 creation of a new structure, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, deliberately intended to bring faculty and students together across disciplinary boundaries, "exploiting the potential that exists at Penn for interdisciplinary research, teaching and discussion."<sup>28</sup> Presumably, that effort was at least in part a response to the 1967 complaint. However, as sorting out when Penn was actually successful in this effort is not my primary concern here, I will leave the final determination to others. I can only say that the 1967 complaint of isolation was certainly not my experience in the 1970s, nor was it the experience of the vast majority of students and faculty in these pages, as evident in a large number of quotes included so far.

Shuy has pointed out that

in order for the field of sociolinguistics to fully benefit from the combined disciplines upon which it was based, something had to give in the traditional academic structure. The ethnographic insights of anthropologists, the social theory and methods of sociology and the basic information of linguistics had to be merged more comfortably. To this point, they obviously were not. Anthropology students were getting a taste of linguistics, but not enough to do the type of work visualized by Hymes. Sociology departments were even less willing to stretch their traditional curricula to accommodate enough linguistics to further the seminal work of Sacks, Garfinkel, Fishman, and Goffman. . . . Thus the mid sixties revealed great ferment and coming together of social scientists to try to determine how to cooperate across traditional disciplinary lines. (1990, 189–90)

He goes on to say the problem was that "social scientists did not want to give up anything to get linguistics. Nor did linguists want to give up anything to get social science. Each wanted to keep its own field, goals and theory-building foremost while enjoying the most minimal fruits of the other" (190). What was special at Penn is that these fields (and others) did merge, at least more successfully than elsewhere, through coordination between Labov, Hymes, and Goffman, as well as Szwed, Birdwhistell, and Worth, and many of the peripheral actors in this story. Penn provided the context and the support, and then encouraged the resulting collaborations, leading to "clearly the best possible world to be in," as Hymes put it by 1970.<sup>29</sup> Hymes and Goffman spent a great deal of time and effort building the group they wanted to have at Penn, quite successfully. Although Worth preceded them,

Hymes was deliberate about enticing Goffman, and then he and Goffman and Worth jointly attracted first Labov and then Birdwhistell to Penn and helped Szwed find a new academic home in folklore when neither anthropology at Temple nor anthropology at Penn were as impressed by his \$1 million grant as they really ought to have been. Given access to so much of Hymes's correspondence, we can see that his efforts were planned (e.g., his letter to Goodenough which refers to "what I came here to build up, and did build up for some years"<sup>30</sup>). That same correspondence makes clear that Goffman was a valued and active partner in building the web of interconnected colleagues. My introduction posed the question: *Who did Goffman deem his own community of like-minded scholars?* That question has now been answered: this team of six central players that Hymes and Goffman wove together, supplemented by the wider community of peers they found and drew in, and the students they trained, at Penn. This community can appropriately be termed an invisible college.

### *Invisible Colleges*

An invisible college is a *college* because those included are scholars conducting research and sharing their conclusions with others in the group, and *invisible* because connections between members remain unacknowledged by many of those outside the group. In common use today, most often an invisible college refers to connections between scholars at different universities who identify as members of the same discipline, even (or especially) when others do not recognize their connections. In these pages, I have turned that concept on its side to examine primarily scholars at the same university drawn from different disciplines. In either case, the affiliations are notably invisible to outsiders—perhaps even more so in the examples described thus far. Like a community of practice (Wenger 1998), members of an invisible college share at least some assumptions, theories, and methods, and discuss ideas in common. It has long been assumed that "each discipline develops as a community of practice," that group members share "assumptions and methods, theories and tools" (Leeds-Hurwitz 2012, 2), and that these differ from those shared by members of other disciplines. That means assumptions, theories, methods, and more were shared among members of this group *despite* their obvious disciplinary differences. It is possible to think of Goffman's connections as one single invisible college or as a set of several overlapping networks; either works. Penn was the center in any

case: either the heart of one vast invisible college or the largest of several smaller ones. Maintaining the geographic metaphor used in the title, these would be Chicago, NIMH, Berkeley, Penn, Indiana, and Texas. Obviously, Goffman participated in activities elsewhere, including the conferences in New York and Amsterdam described in detail. But my intent here has not been to describe every activity, every city, every colleague; others have done much of that work already (as in Winkin 2022a). Rather, my intent has been to put some of the puzzle pieces together, focusing on a particular location (Penn) over a specific time period (1968–1982, when Goffman was there).

Hymes proposed another term for the collection of colleagues working together at Penn, calling them a “constellation.”<sup>31</sup> Given that, it made sense when he continued the metaphor by later referring to the MAP group’s members as all being “stars” (Hymes to Grimshaw, Aug 8, 1975, ADG). (Interestingly, while problems in MAP were said to be due to there being too many stars, the fact that all the core group members at Penn were most certainly all stars did not cause any of the same difficulties.) The important fact was that, at least in the successful projects, group members all helped one another to think through the new ideas they were developing and consider implications; they read one another’s drafts and provided detailed critique. As Fine has so gracefully phrased it, “We think as a community: thinking is neither individual nor universal, but is social” (2024, 515). And, as a community, one of the responsibilities was to share their ideas, and talk about what interested them and what they were learning through their individual research projects. Fishman used the phrase “community of like-minded scholars” (1997, 88) in describing what he went looking for in the early stages of developing sociolinguistics. But whether we use the phrase “invisible college” or “constellation of stars” or “community of like-minded scholars,” the central concept describes a group whose members share overlapping interests and concerns for a new or developing topic, and who are willing to put in the work needed to contribute to and advance our understanding of it. In any case, meeting, talking, sharing conclusions, presenting at conferences, reviewing drafts, publishing, training the next generation—all of these are activities in which the groups described in these pages engaged. And Goffman was part of it all. Goffman was a valued member of these groups and projects, holding conversations with others and ensuring that publications eventually resulted, even though none of these activities is what he is known for, and his role in these various activities has been obscured and forgotten.

Goffman's ideas were typically published in sole-authored books, articles, or chapters. But, as demonstrated here, those ideas were developed in the context of and with others who held overlapping ideas. This does not mean he was any the less creative, only that original ideas benefit from discussion with others prior to publication, whether in person or on paper, and that creativity begets more creativity. Brilliant ideas by themselves are not really the issue. Goffman had many brilliant and original ideas, without question. But, in order for later generations to respect his accomplishments, we should not require that he have developed them entirely on his own. The fact that he collaborated in various capacities with so many other people demonstrates much of how ideas are formed and shaped and shared, and how they influence others. Goffman was part of group conversations across many contexts and topics. This has not been known only because we have not been looking for evidence, but such evidence has now been uncovered. Conferences, two journals, a book series, and a research center to support junior as well as senior scholars: these are the most substantial contexts in which he developed and shared ideas with others. The large number of unpublished manuscripts Goffman sent out for review by colleagues or reviewed for others sending drafts to him, the conferences he helped to organize, his preference for the role of carper, his thoughtful comments at the end of a conference synthesizing what the group had concluded and consideration of how to move forward, his uncommonly detailed comments on articles (especially those submitted to *Language in Society*, but to some extent also book manuscripts submitted to *Communication and Conduct*)—all of which have been documented in these pages—together emphasize the ways in which Goffman was clearly engaging with the ideas of others in addition to developing and sharing his own.

### *Disciplinary History*

Finally, there are lessons to be learned from the stories told in these pages relating to disciplinary history. This is partly significant because the value of understanding disciplinary history was taken for granted across departments at Penn where multiple departments offered entire courses in their own discipline's history for new graduate students. (In the 1970s, linguistics alone had two—one offered by Hymes and the other by Labov—with virtually no overlap between these courses, reflecting their quite different emphases; I know this because I took both). But what has been learned about

researching disciplinary history as a result of this project? The first and most obvious lesson is to look at archives for records of what was said or what occurred rather than taking received wisdom for granted. Just because all of Goffman's publications were sole authored, that does not mean he did not talk about ideas with colleagues, critique drafts by others and ask others to critique his own, and generally discuss theory, method, and research. As Murray argues, when doing history, correspondence provides a reliable record of who was saying what to whom and when. Goffman did not donate his correspondence, and actively discouraged people from spending time describing him as a person rather than focusing on his ideas. However, that has not stopped later scholars from writing about him as well as his ideas; the incomplete record has simply been misinterpreted. The goal here has not been to attend to what Goffman deemed unworthy of attention, but instead to expand our understanding of the context of his contributions, in addition to those of others with whom he collaborated. More people should read his letters for themselves, now that so many are available in various archives. The majority of my time in preparing this book has been spent discovering previously unknown and/or uncited archival sources and putting the puzzle pieces together into a coherent story. It is when all the pieces are put together—publications and unpublished reports, agendas and meeting minutes, interviews and correspondence—that the full story is most likely to be understood. As Davis says: “The cross-fertilization of ideas and the importance of what were in many cases long collaborations cannot be appreciated from a scan of credits and publications” (2001, 43), so the goal must be to expand the varieties of documentation discovered, consulted, and taken into account.

Another important lesson: New ideas move slowly but with repetition become accepted. Some of the story of sociolinguistics has been told in these pages—how sociologists and anthropologists worked with linguists to emphasize the study of language in use: how people do things with words, and how documenting the context provides essential information about meaning. It took decades, and many, many scholars to move from these separate disciplines to the study of topics otherwise ignored in the gap between disciplines. In the process, Goffman's role in early sociolinguistics has been clarified, as has some of the larger history of that specialization.

However, while we often assume that new ideas are developed by individuals working alone, in fact, much (perhaps most) of the time they arise (or at least are clarified and refined) through discussions held in casual conver-

sations over meals, or more formally in working groups, panels, symposia, and conferences. Successful events lead to publications, and publications influence a still wider set of scholars. That is how knowledge grows. The fact that all of Goffman's publications are sole authored is without question a true statement, yet even so, he was frequently part of larger conversations with an expansive network of overlapping groups of colleagues, a fact which has most often been overlooked or ignored. The implication is that more study of collaborative groups of all sorts would likely repay the effort of documentation. Linked to this is the fact that intellectual history generally, and disciplinary history specifically, most often focus on a few "great men" (and they are nearly always men). Perhaps interdisciplinary history can broaden that to include the study of entire networks instead (and occasionally include women and minorities of various sorts).

Ideas cannot be generated, discussed, or transmitted except through the agency of specific people. Approaching history through the analysis of someone's career ensures that the human element will not be minimized unduly. Disciplinary history is composed of the actions (and interactions) of individuals as they talk and write about their ideas. It is easy to forget this in the process of following ideas through time, but if we forget it, we lose the necessary human perspective. As Gruber explains, "To describe the conflict or growth of ideas without describing the personal medium within which they grew is to deprive them of their human character" (1966, 21).

In addition, we must examine failures as well as successes: MAP and most of the minor projects here might seem irrelevant, since they did not lead to the sort of substantial influence achieved by the more significant major projects. What is the Semiotic Program that Hymes proposed, but which was never created, in comparison to *Language in Society*, when that journal is still viable after more than fifty years? But while there will often be more failures than successes, that is not always a bad thing, for failures can often lead to later successes by building stronger ties between colleagues and revealing what does not work (or even who is not the strongest leader). Past research on theory groups has shed some light on the significance of personal relationships and connections among researchers. Penn provided the context for most of the projects included, brought together the people and their ideas, and offered opportunities for both the intellectual and organizational leadership that Murray (1994) found to be essential to ensure good ideas become accepted rather than only invented and proposed. The successful projects bear out Murray's views of minimum requirements: in-



tellectual leadership (having of good and original ideas) and organizational leadership (facilitating the acceptance of those ideas through the construction of a group as well as public opportunities to share them) are both required (see Mullins 1973 for further details and additional requirements). Others who wish to establish such groups, or simply to have their ideas at least considered seriously if not accepted, would do well to take note.

Building on this case study, other disciplinary historians should look for evidence of other invisible colleges. Those made up of scholars at the same university but organizationally based within different departments can be just as hidden as the more frequently studied type where scholars are aligned disciplinarily but geographically distributed—perhaps even more so, because disciplinary historians have typically been trained within a single discipline themselves and so are more likely to know the story of members of that one field of study rather than others. Perhaps that is why so few people have written more than a sentence or two (and those mostly by Penn alumni) about the incredibly strong interdisciplinary network in which Goffman was embedded. Now that multiple colleagues from his network have deposited their papers in archives (notably Hymes, Grimshaw, Sebeok, and Worth, but also Duncan, Hughes, Wallace, Bauman, and others), there is ample evidence of their connections and of their efforts, and so Goffman’s connections to his peers are invisible no more.

Historians should also focus far more often on looking for examples of interdisciplinarity. Darnell has called for “a new paradigm for the histories of anthropology . . . around the concept of interdisciplinarity,” since “adequate histories can only exist in their plurality” (2022, 1–2). I would argue that all disciplinary history, not only that of anthropology, requires consideration of interdisciplinarity, since disciplines are made rather than found, and so they are social constructions (Leeds-Hurwitz 2012), with boundaries not set in stone but variable. And, in fact, as I have been writing this, a new book has appeared specifically examining the history of interdisciplinary research projects: Feuerhahn and Mandressi (2025) also highlight the virtual absence of historical studies of interdisciplinary projects. Perhaps one day more universities will find another organizational structure than the currently common divisions of faculty into departments by discipline. Until that occurs, however, historians should not be constrained by such flimsy boundaries.

Finally, it is important for historians to remember that all relevant information is not necessarily included in formal publications. Articles and books are the peaks as it were, but much research and many ideas remain

unpublished. These can be discovered through what Gruber (1966) has labeled “fugitive products.” He describes them thus: “Dependence upon works written to be published shows us only part of a man; they are the landmarks of an intellectual life. Much more important—and of course, much more difficult to come by—are the informal and fugitive products—letters, journals, and impressions. From these we can glimpse a science in the making” (25–6). In such fugitive products, we can discover the connections between the work of different scholars, as well as their hopes and plans for the future. The use of these fugitive works in conjunction with materials which have been published (for I would not go so far as to argue that the former make sense without the latter) increases the adequacy and depth of our knowledge and understanding of what occurred in the past. One of the sorts of information not generally revealed through publications, but which does become very clear through letters, would be connections between individual researchers such as those documented in these pages; another would be projects that were imagined and designed, but either were never carried out or proved unsuccessful (as with most of the minor projects), which demonstrate interest and intent, as well as interconnections which may otherwise remain undiscovered.

In the end, interdisciplinarity serves as the heart of the story of Goffman’s invisible college at Penn, as well as before Penn, adjacent to Penn, and beyond Penn. The scholars included in these pages were willing to ask questions beyond the obvious topics for the disciplines in which they had been trained, and/or into which they had been hired. Long after the fact, peripheral members of the group still comment on how “scholars such as William Labov, Dell Hymes, Erving Goffman and Ray Birdwhistell were pioneers in the social study of social communication” (Appadurai 2016, 5), and notice the continued assumption of connection between these group members decades after the group dispersed and multiple individuals have died. The lesson of this story for other scholars and other universities is simple: It is completely reasonable to look to colleagues with shared interests across departmental and disciplinary boundaries to support one another in research endeavors and, in fact, doing so may result in particularly strong ties as the needs of a research investigation take priority over disciplinary or departmental politics or assumptions. Goffman looked across disciplinary boundaries for the best and the brightest stars to be a part of the constellation he helped to construct at Penn. He participated fully, whether that meant notifying a potential author that their work could not be accepted for

publication or helping to design a research center to obtain a major grant. The most important lesson of this story for (inter)disciplinary historians should have become abundantly clear: Do not accept what everyone says; instead, search for relevant documentation, and put together the pieces of your own puzzle. By doing so, I learned that Goffman was a colleague to many, and a good one. He was key to building a particularly strong invisible college, based at Penn yet incorporating additional scholars at Chicago, NIMH, Berkeley, Indiana, and Texas, as well as a few activities extending to New York, and even as far away as Amsterdam.

### *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Myerson to Hymes, Dec 14, 1971, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Meyerson, Martin, 1971, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> I am assuming he helped to organize at least the Urban Ethnography conference sponsored by the Center for Urban Ethnography given that he was the associate director, although I must admit that I have yet to find specific documentation for this. But he clearly was involved in the organization of that event in some ways, as when he checked in early with Hughes about his participation (documented in chapter 4).

<sup>3</sup> NWAWE stands for New Ways of Analyzing Variation in English, a conference organized at Georgetown University. It has not been discussed elsewhere in this book but is included here for the fact that it resulted in one of the few journal articles published by Goffman after a conference presentation (1976b).

<sup>4</sup> There were no formal presentations at this conference, and no resulting publications, but Goffman was an invited and active participant, with others, as described in detail in chapter 6, and shows up frequently in the written (but unpublished) record of the event.

<sup>5</sup> As described in Shuy (1990), others at that meeting included many mentioned in these pages: Ferguson, Fishman, Garfinkel, Goffman, Gumperz, Hymes, Labov, Sacks, and Schegloff.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes, Committee on Sociolinguistics, March 18–19, 1971, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series II: Conferences and Committees, 1955–1987, Subseries D: Social Science Research Council, Committee on Sociolinguistics, 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Hymes to Sherzer, May 24, 1972, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Sherzer, Joel, 1968–87.

<sup>8</sup> For further discussions of Goffman's role in sociolinguistics, see Deckert and Vickers 2011; Duranti 2003; Schifffrin 1996; Weninger and Williams 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Other members of the committee in earlier years included Joseph H. Greenberg, Thomas Sebeok, Everett Hughes, John Useem (Useem 1963), as well as Susan Ervin-Tripp (Heller 2018). Ferguson was chair 1963–70; Hymes moved into the position next (Hymes 1972b). To highlight the connection between the 1964 Committee on Sociolinguistics Conference on Sociolinguistics held at Indiana and the Gumperz and Hymes volume (1972), it is worth noting that the title of Ferguson's report on the former event mirrored their book title: Both were called "Directions in Sociolinguistics" (Ferguson 1965). A related title was used by Grimshaw for an article, "Directions for Research in Sociolinguistics" (1966).

<sup>10</sup> Labov to Hymes, Dec 16, 1968, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence

1951–1987, Labov, William, folder 1, 1963–1972.

<sup>11</sup> Hymes to Worth, May 25, 1969, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Worth, Sol, 1966–1977.

<sup>12</sup> Worth to Hymes, May 7, 1968, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Worth, Sol, 1966–1977.

<sup>13</sup> Hymes to Glassie, Feb 7, 1970, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Glassie, Henry, 1970–82.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum on Committee on Sociolinguistics by Hymes to Committee, Apr 11, 1970, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series II: Conferences and Committees, Subseries D: Social Science Research Council, Committee on Sociolinguistics, 1970.

<sup>15</sup> Hymes to Worth, Jun 10, 1969, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Worth, Sol, 1966–1977.

<sup>16</sup> As in Fought to Hymes, Apr 11, 1980, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series II: Conferences and Committees, 1955–1987, Subseries E: Other Committees, Interdisciplinary Committee for a Program in Language, Culture and Society, 1979–1986.

<sup>17</sup> Szwed to Hymes, Aug 7, 1974, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Szwed, John F., 1965–1981.

<sup>18</sup> As explained in Leeds-Hurwitz 1984; see also Winkin 1984b, on Hymes's use of ethnography.

<sup>19</sup> Hymes to Dean Vartan Gregorian, Jul 8, 1974, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Gregorian, Vartan, 1974–1981.

<sup>20</sup> Birdwhistell to Leeds-Hurwitz, n.d. [received August 1991], in the author's files. He was responding to an early draft of Leeds-Hurwitz 1994, when I requested critique because he had been a participant in the project described.

<sup>21</sup> <https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v17pdf/n03/021271.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://web.sas.upenn.edu/endowed-professors/pik/>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://pikprofessors.upenn.edu/about-pik>.

<sup>24</sup> Ben-Amos, Gross, Meyer, G. Prince, Herrnstein Smith to Regular Members, copied to Meyerson and Gregorian, Dec 13, 1978, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series II: Conferences and Committees, 1955–1987, Subseries E: Other Committees, Center for the Study of Art and Symbolic Behavior, 1978, 1986.

<sup>25</sup> Hymes to Labov, Dec 11, 1980, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence, 1951–1987, Labov, William, folder 2, 1974–1987.

<sup>26</sup> Labov to Hymes, Dec 20, 1980, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence, 1951–1987, Labov, William, folder 2, 1974–1987.

<sup>27</sup> <https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v14pdf/n05/021668.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v24pdf/n32/052378-insert.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Hymes to Labov, Jan 21, 1970, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Labov, William, folder 1, 1963–1972.

<sup>30</sup> Hymes to Goodenough, Nov 27, 1971, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Goodenough, Ward H., 1958, 1960, 1970–86.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., Hymes to Goffman, Jan 9, 1968, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Goffman, Erving, 1967–1982; and Hymes to Meyerson, Nov 17, 1971, DHH, Subcollection 1, Series I: Correspondence 1951–1987, Meyerson, Martin, 1971, 1979.

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