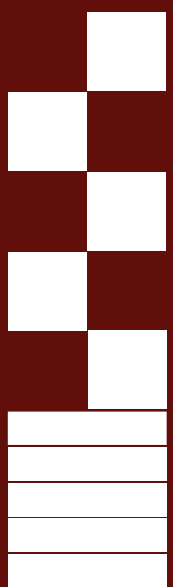
1953

# Communication Conduct in an Island Community

Erving Goffman



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*Erving Goffman*

# COMMUNICATION CONDUCT IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY

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# COMMUNICATION CONDUCT IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Division of the Social Sciences in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

Department of Sociology

*By*

Erving Goffman

*Chicago, Illinois*

*December, 1953*

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*Yves Winkin*

doi

Erving Goffman's dissertation is the Rosetta stone for his entire work, which, as time goes by, appears to be more and more groundbreaking. Why was *Communication Conduct in an Island Community* not published earlier? Why did commentators not exploit it more systematically? Why did Goffman himself not try to have it published? All those questions are unanswerable today. But here is the gem. Not much of a frame is needed to appreciate it—only the circumstances of Goffman's fieldwork in the Shetlands, and then some highlighting. When Goffman defended his dissertation in the early summer of 1953, his committee members were none too pleased, according to legend. Seventy years later, the piece appears luminous, extraordinarily mature, as if Goffman were already a fully professional sociologist from day one.[1]

## Maybe He Was a Spy: Goffman in Unst (1949–1951)[2]

"Out of the blue," mumbled Charlotte Mouat, when I asked her about Erving Goffman's arrival in Baltasound in December 1949.[3]

Baltasound is the main community on the island of Unst, all the way to the north end of the Shetland archipelago. Charlotte Mouat was the owner and the manager of the Springfield Hotel, which served as Goffman's headquarters during his fieldwork period, between 1949 and 1951. I spent nine days on the island in late August 1988, trying to meet as many people as possible who remembered him almost forty years later. Many did, actually, but they still could

[1] Special thanks to Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz for her graceful editing job.

[2] I am relying on data collected in Unst in 1988 (August 25–September 2), and the two papers derived from that brief stint of fieldwork: Winkin, "Goffman à Baltasound, 1949–1951," *Politix* 3–4 (1988): 66–70; Winkin, "Baltasound as the Symbolic Capital of Social Interaction," in *Erving Goffman*, ed. Gary A. Fine and Gregory W. H. Smith (London: Sage, 2000), 193–212. For a recent analysis of the dissertation, see Karl Lenz, "Dissertation: *Communication Conduct in an Island Community*," *Goffman Handbuch*, ed. Karl Lenz and Robert Hettlage (Berlin: J. B. Metzler, 2022), 257–65.

[3] Interview on August 31, 1988, with the help of her nephew, Tony Mouat, and a home nurse.

not figure out why he came and stayed for so long near them. Yes, near them, not with them.

There are plenty of small mysteries to unravel. Why would a foreign young man come to Unst in December and ask for a room at the hotel? There was absolutely nothing to do on the island at that time of the year. The weather was awful; the sun barely showed up between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. There were no birds to watch, and the newly revived "Up-Helly-Aa," the Viking-looking celebration, was not due before the end of February. Maybe he was a spy—so apparently suggested some people, according to Mary Priest, who was one of the waitresses at the Springfield Hotel.[4] After all, the island had been strategic during World War II, with thousands of soldiers in barracks, many boats and submarines in the harbor, and refugees from Norway.

[4] Mary Priest, interview by the author, August 26, 1988.

In addition, the young man, always in a khaki army jacket with many pockets and in boots laced up to the knees, just walked around a lot. What could he be doing all day? He lived for some time in the annex of the hotel and then bought a small cottage from Wally Priest, a few hundred yards from the Springfield. Priest was engaged to Mary and needed the money to buy a new house in time for the wedding. As Miss Sutherland, the eighty-something daughter of the former local policeman, wrote to me:

> He, as I remember, was not a very big person; somehow one felt that he was rather aloof, a kind of solitary figure in a world of his own. He was said to be an "anthropologist" who was writing a book on the subject. This was a kind of deterrent to those of us who weren't very well educated. One often wondered if he wasn't lonely, sitting by himself in that bare little cottage but his need for privacy would be respected.[5]

[5] L. J. Sutherland, email message to author, August 4, 1988.

Goffman was thus a mystery for many islanders. But this is also a mystery for the biographer: Why Unst, and more specifically, why Unst in December? There are partial answers, or at least plausible answers. One has to do with Lloyd Warner, who supervised Goffman's master's thesis in sociology at the University of Chicago. It happened that he had become friendly with anthropologist Ralph Piddington when they were both doing fieldwork in Australia in the late 1920s. Piddington moved to the University of Edinburgh in 1946 and envisaged the creation of a department of anthropology. By 1949 there was money available for a graduate student to do tutorials and to conduct fieldwork in the Shetland Islands. Warner suggested the job to Goffman, who applied and got it. But how to explain that Goffman decided to move beyond the United States for his dissertation, the only one of his cohort to do so? One may only conjecture that the idea of an island ethnography, à la Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands

or Radcliffe-Brown in the Andaman Islands, was seductive. There may also have been some pressure on Warner's part, who probably wanted to repeat a "community study" in Europe, a few years after the work of his students Solon Kimball and Conrad Arensberg in Ireland.[6] And a third possible reason: Goffman may have wanted some time away from Chicago, in spite of the fact he was engaged to Angelica Schuyler Choate, a master's student in human development at the University of Chicago. But she could visit him in Edinburgh—she certainly had enough money on her own to afford such a trip.[7]

The fact that he arrived in Unst at a bad time of the year, if there is any good one on that rough island, may well have to do with his duties as an instructor in Edinburgh. He completed his term before taking the boat from Aberdeen. Between December 1949 and May 1951, a stretch of eighteen months, he totaled twelve months on the island. The remaining six months were probably spent in Edinburgh for his classes, and in London, where he visited his old partner Liz Bott, who was then completing her doctorate at the London School of Economics.

There are more mysteries, but there are at least partial answers available to solve them. Could we suggest that Goffman arrived on the island with a clear mandate from Warner to undertake a community study? We can answer positively on the basis of three leads. First, the psychological toolkit: As Goffman became comfortable with the hotel's two maids, he often asked them to look at "drawing sets and tell him what we saw in them," as Mary Priest told me.[8] At first, she hesitated, because she did not know what he would write about the answers, but finally she went ahead. ("I was told it came from Germany. Do you think it is true?") Clair Auty (*née* Anderson) was even more explicit: "All too often" Goffman would give her "these stupid cards" with blots and spots of colors and ask her to tell him what she saw. "He told me I had a vivid imagination." There were also "triangles and circles," and he would ask her what the odd one was. "He said I had a fair brain if I was not so idle."[9] Clearly, Goffman was applying what he had learned for his master's thesis, during which he had asked fifty upper-middle-class women to take the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). He worked under the supervision of Warner, who always considered psychological tests an integral part of the anthropologist's tool kit.

Then there were constant queries about social class. According to my informants, Goffman was "obsessed" with social class on the island, and kept asking them questions about the "gentry" and the differences they perceived between the gentry and themselves—that is, the commoners, especially the "crofters" (small farmers). He wanted to know everything about the Saxbys and the Spences,

[6] Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940). In the preface, Warner wrote: "The book that has grown out of their experience there is an excellent contribution to our ever-growing body of knowledge of the communities of the world. From such a knowledge we may sometimes expect a comparative science of the social life of man" (ix).

[7] Yves Winkin, "Life and Work of Goffman," in *Goffman Handbuch,* ed. Karl Lenz and Robert Hettlage (Berlin: J. B. Metzler, 2022), 3–11.

[8] Priest, interview.

[9] Clair Auty, interviews by the author, August 1988. The administration of the psychology tests was a recurrent theme in the many conversations I had with Clair Auty.

the two upper-class families of the island. "He made you talk more than he did," as Claire Auty put it. Goffman was clearly adopting Warner's approach to society, although he apparently never developed strong ties with members of the gentry, except for the Guthries, the new doctor and his wife. As Tony Mouat, Charlotte's nephew, drove me by the Saxby house, he noticed the older Saxby on his bike and stopped to ask him about Goffman. I wrote in my diary: "But Saxby, apparently, only met him at New Year's Eve and had nothing more to say. See how a filter appears: people I can/I can't see."

Finally, although this is anecdotal, Warner delivered the Munro Lectures (ten of them!) at the University of Edinburgh in April–May 1950, on "The Application of Social Anthropology to Contemporary Life."[10] In the memoir that his widow, Mildred Hall Warner, published many years later, there is no mention of Goffman being in the audience.[11] But maybe he was, and maybe he met and discussed with Warner his fieldwork in progress. It is, at least, certain that Goffman did not meet Radcliffe-Brown (who may also have been in the audience). Recall his famous dedication of *Relations in Public*: "Dedicated to the memory of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown whom on his visit to the University of Edinburgh in 1950 I almost met."[12]

Now where do we go from here? Clearly, Goffman's dissertation is not another community study à la Warner, despite hints that his original intention was to write in that vein. So, we must ask: What happened? An interpretation may be offered: Goffman made necessity a virtue—and in the process provided the groundwork for a new subfield in sociology.

In 1984, the American sociologist Michael Schudson scrutinized *Communication Conduct* and stressed the fact that Goffman spent most of his observational efforts on three sites: the hotel, the billiards, and the "socials." Those were selective places: Few local people would ever visit the hotel, the pool room was restricted to men, and the activities of the socials were either "by invitation only" (as with whist) or by age only (as with a dance). So Schudson concluded:

> So far as one can tell from Goffman's dissertation, he had no intimate contact with crofter family life. There is no indication that he made any friends; there is no special "informant" that anthropologists have often discussed with such feeling. Indeed, Goffman is intentionally anti-anthropological. He claims that he was not doing a study "of a community" but a study "in a community." But putting aside a concern for the macrosociological features of the community he studied and putting aside any interest in features that distinguished this community from others, he inadvertently wound up examining primarily the social interactions that most resembled interactions in the most detached and impersonal settings of modern life.[13]

[10] The lectures were turned into a book, *Structure of American Life*, published in 1952 by University of Edinburgh Press and republished in 1953 in an augmented version by University of Chicago Press under the title *American Life: Dream and Reality*.

[11] Mildred Hall Warner, *W. Lloyd Warner Social Anthropologist* (New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1988). Chapter XII (pp. 163–74) is devoted to the Munro Lectures.

[12] Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

[13] Michael Schudson, "Embarrassment and Erving Goffman's Idea of Human Nature," *Theory and Society* 13 (1984): 640.

Schudson could not have known that Goffman cultivated a close relationship with one "special informant," the postman James (Jimmy) Johnson, who was sixty-six in 1950. He was Claire Auntie's uncle. According to his nephew Bob Anderson, Claire's brother, he was well-travelled and well-read; he knew local dialects and folklore. He was often seen walking around the island with Goffman.[14]

[14] Bob Anderson, interview by the author, August 30, 1988.

But Schudson is right about Goffman having "no intimate contact with crofter family life." Indeed, he never lived with a family; he lived by himself in a tiny cottage and took his meals at the nearby hotel. But could he have done otherwise? Schudson suggests that Goffman selected those three observational sites. In response, I would like to suggest that these were the only three semi-public places that were open to him, along with the local store, the church, and the reading room (adjacent to the billiards room). He could also hang around the harbor and a few other public places. But private houses were off limits, except for an occasional meal, and people were most taciturn. He was stuck. Goffman explained at the very beginning of his dissertation that he tried to participate in as many situations and social occasions as possible. He also explained that he did not conduct formal interviews, did not employ questionnaires, and did not use tape-recorders or "motion-picture cameras," all methods which would have been out of place. As he put it: "In order to observe people off their guard, you must first win their trust."[15] This is all quite fine and respectable, but one could be forgiven for suspecting that this was a rationalization of an impossible situation. There was no way he could have deployed a Warner-inspired community study, which would have involved home visits, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. So, instead, he turned to the one thing available: "conversational interaction," as the first sentence of the dissertation says. For this, he "just" needed to look and listen nearby, and to write notes down once back at the cottage. The islanders' taciturnity led him to make the best out of skimpy materials. Ultimately, the results turned out to be, quite simply, revolutionary. The dissertation is incredibly innovative. Goffman's entire oeuvre cannot be properly understood if one does not read the dissertation first. It provides the matrix for the following ten books.

[15] Goffman, *Communication Conduct in an Island Community*, 5. Hereafter *CC*. Page numbers refer to the original manuscript.

## Birth of a Sociology

The radical nature of Goffman's dissertation begins with the title. There is no subtitle, and no reference to a theoretical frame or methodology. It was likely the first time ever that "communication" was used for a dissertation title in sociology, and probably one of the first times the term was used in the singular in a dissertation in

any discipline. Moreover, "communication," which was often used as a modifier in those days, was here associated with "conduct." "Conduct" was not regularly used in the social sciences in the early 1950s—and still isn't today. What is most remarkable in the association between "communication" and "conduct" is that the very meaning of communication is transformed from a means to an activity. At the time, the dominant usage of "communication" (again, most often used in the plural) referred to means, first to physical facilities, such as roads and railways, and later to media, especially the press and broadcasting. As Raymond Williams has pointed out, this use (of "media") "is not settled before mC20 [mid-twentieth century]."[16] But the singularization of the term was not completed until the early 1970s[17] and may be related, in parallel with notions such as "society," "culture," or "language," to a progressive conceptualization.[18] In any case, "communication conduct" sets the tone: Goffman intends to break with then-current vocabulary and ways of thinking. A source of inspiration must have been the 1951 book by Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry*, explicitly mentioned in Chapter II.[19] Ruesch and Bateson used "communication" to refer to "interpersonal" and "intrapersonal" exchanges of messages. That was congruent with Goffman's approach to communication as interaction practice.[20]

The redeployment of "interaction" is certainly the major theoretical breakthrough of the dissertation. At the time, the notion of interaction was frequently used in social psychology, especially in small group research, with the underlying assumption that it was somehow the equivalent of "mild, short-term, mutual impact." Papers were full of "feedbacks" and "effects."[21] Goffman rejected all that from page one of his dissertation:

> The research was not designed to determine thoroughly or precisely the history of any interaction practice, the frequency and place of its occurrence, the social function which it performed, or even the range of persons among whom it occurred.

Many years later, he would return to his rejection of social psychology and its use of "interaction":

> My belief is that the way to study something is to start by taking a shot at treating the matter as a system in its own right, at its own level, and, although this bias is also found in contemporary structuralism, there is an unrelated source, the one I drew on, in the functionalism of Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown. It is that bias which led me to try to treat face-to-face interaction as a domain in its own right in my dissertation, and to try to rescue the term "interaction" from the place where the great social psychologists and their avowed followers seemed prepare to leave it.[22]

[16] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 72.

[17] Elvira M. Arcenas, " 'Communication' in the Making of Academic Communication" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995), https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI9543043.

[18] George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 195–233.

[19] Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1951). See *CC*, 40.

[20] See Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz and Yves Winkin, "Goffman and Communication," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Goffman Studies*, ed. Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Greg Smith (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2022), 184–94.

[21] See H. J. Leavitt and R. A. H. Mueller, "Some Effects of Feedback on Communication," *Human Relations* 4 (1951): 401–10. Seen again in P. Hare, F. F. Borgatta, and R. F. Bales, eds., *Small Groups: Studies in Social Interaction* (New York: Knopf, 1955), 414–23.

[22] Erving Goffman, "A Reply to Denzin and Keller," *Contemporary Sociology* 10, no. 1 (1981): 62.

Note how Goffman repeats the formula "in its own right": It seems to be borrowed from Durkheim's own lexical fetish: "society as a reality *sui generis.*" Indeed, what Goffman is after is the reality *sui generis* of interaction. This is (again) clear from the very first page of his dissertation: He wants to "build a systematic framework useful in studying interaction throughout our society." And here comes the crucial justification: "As the study progressed, conversational interaction came to be seen as one species of social order." We can observe the birth of the "interaction order" (the title of his 1982 American Sociological Association presidential address) right here.[23] Goffman is indeed taking interaction away from social psychology and reinstalling it "as a domain in its own right" within sociology, thanks to the idea that it is "one species of social order." For thirty years, Goffman pursued the same argument, but he often buried it under other explorations. Here, in the dissertation, it is crystal clear.

[23] Published as Goffman, "The Interaction Order," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 1 (1983): 1–17.

## Such a Luminous Piece of Work

The dissertation is structured in five parts: description of the fieldwork site (one chapter), presentation of the theoretical model (one chapter)—and three more parts of theoretical developments (five, ten, and six chapters, respectively). It is highly unusual for a dissertation to devote only one chapter to the description of the field and twenty-two chapters to theoretical elaborations. And those chapters bear titles as odd as "Indelicate Communication," "Safe Supplies," or "Involvement Poise." Imagine how puzzled the members of the committee must have been. Goffman was surely aware of the "false impression" that his unorthodox presentation might produce since he tried to correct it in the "Introduction":

> . . . the beginning of each chapter is phrased in terms of a general discussion of particular communication concepts, and only later in each chapter are field data introduced. This stylistic device is employed as a way of rendering the data easy for use in the development of a general communication framework. In consequence, a false impression is sometimes given that the field data has been brought in as an afterthought, merely to illustrate concepts earlier arrived at. I should like to make it quite clear that the terms and concepts employed in this study came after and not before the facts.[24]

[24] *CC*, 9.

This is not the place to offer a full analysis of the dissertation. Let me just highlight a few outstanding innovations.

Once "Dixon" (the pseudonym for Baltasound) is presented, Goffman bluntly offers his "sociological model," which consists of a nine-point parallel between social order and social interaction—or interaction order, as he called it later in the dissertation. This is the

first and only time in his entire work he so explicitly shows how the interaction order proceeds from the social order. This is also one of the rare occurrences of a clearly acknowledged debt to Talcott Parsons (*The Social System*, 1951) and, even more strangely, to Chester Barnard (*The Functions of the Executive*, 1938).[25] It may be worth noting that, at the end of the 1920s, both Parsons and Barnard attended the Harvard seminar of Lawrence Henderson, a physiologist who was fond of the work of Vilfredo Pareto.[26] Between Pareto, Henderson, Barnard, Parsons, and Goffman, there is a common denominator: the notion of system, loosely defined as a set of interdependent elements. For Parsons and Goffman, regulating mechanisms maintain the system in operation. The system may be society as whole or a single interaction. As systems, society and interaction work the same way: When they are under pressure, coping mechanisms intervene to maintain the balance, i.e., to maintain social order or interaction order. Goffman is thus going to introduce, almost in passing, notions that will be developed later, notably in *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), such as embarrassment and working acceptance.[27] He is also going to offer his vision of interaction "not as a scene of harmony but as an arrangement for pursuing a cold war."[28] As Parsons would not have dared to say, an open war is too costly, but a cold war is affordable—here Goffman is already adumbrating his work of the 1960s on strategy, as discussed with conflict specialists such as Thomas Schelling, Albert Wohlstetter, and Daniel Ellsberg.

[25] Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951); Chester Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938).

[26] L. J. Henderson, *Pareto's General Sociology: A Physiologist's Interpretation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935).

[27] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959).

[28] *CC*, 40.

Once his model has settled, Goffman turns to conversational interaction. This is stunning. Goffman is the only Chicago sociologist who finally paid his due to the linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir. As Everett Hughes later admitted, Chicago interactional sociology never managed to deal empirically with language as social behavior.[29] Moreover, Goffman foreshadows the sociolinguistics movement of the 1960s, led by Dell Hymes and John Gumperz. It is even more surprising to call into being an ethnography of speaking in the early 1950s, when the field was dominated by a descriptive linguistics which claims that texts indicate their own structures, a position leaving little room for the speakers or the context.[30] Goffman was the only sociologist of his generation to break away from such an attitude and, instead, provide an early argument for an analysis of language as interaction. Only in his 1964 paper "The Neglected Situation" would he return to language, and then again, much later, in *Forms of Talk*, his last book (1981).[31] But he opened the field thirty years ahead of everyone.

[29] See Stephen O. Murray, *Group Formation in Social Science* (Edmonton: Linguistic Research, 1983), 79, 243 (letter from Hughes to H. D. Duncan).

[30] Dell Hymes, "Linguistics: The Field," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 356.

[31] Goffman, "The Neglected Situation," *American Anthropologist* 66, no. 6 (1964): 133–36; Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

Goffman does not reduce his scope to verbal exchanges. He discusses in Chapter IV the old notion of "expressive behavior," quoting Darwin and Sapir as well as Gordon Allport and Philip Vernon (*Stud-*

*ies in Expressive Movements*, 1933) and, more surprisingly, the French psychologist Charles Blondel (*Introduction à la psychologie collective*, 1928).[32] He swiftly navigates between the traditional characterization of gestures as spontaneously revealing the "soul" and the culturally oriented approach stressing the learned, and thus intentional, aspects of the gestural repertoire:

> . . . the member is obliged to obey the rules of expression, once learned, in a sufficiently automatic and unselfconscious way so that observers will in fact be partly justified in their assumption that the emotion conveyed to them is a dependable index of the actor's emotional state.[33]

This is the necessary platform for developing the notion of "impression management" that will be so central in *Presentation of Self*. By then, citations to the background literature will have disappeared. But it is worth stressing that Goffman had already laid the theoretical groundwork in his dissertation. And he did not need the metaphor of the theatre to build his case—a "dramaturgical model" that seduced superficial commentators for years.

When we read Chapter V, "The Management of Information about Oneself," we realize that the quintessential Goffman we all know, the sociologist deciphering "members"—be they members of a rural community, of a mental hospital, or of a casino—is already fully evident in his dissertation, at age thirty. Intentional linguistic behavior and supposedly impulsive expressive behavior are combined to produce interactions based on mutual "exploitations" of information. The receiver exploits the expressive behavior of the sender "as a source of impression about him," while the sender "may attempt to exploit the fact that this exploitation occurs and attempt to express himself in a way that is calculated to impress the recipient in a desired way."[34] We all know this, yet it is still impressive to find it so clearly expressed in Goffman's dissertation.

It is also impressive to find Goffman shifting, by the end of Chapter VII, from an exploitative view of interaction to a ritual view: "Even more than being a game of informational management, conversation interaction is a problem in ritual management."[35] This is the model later developed in "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor" (1956).[36] Here, in the dissertation, only two pages are needed to reshuffle Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.[37] But they are sufficient to break away with the rather paranoid vision of social life developed in the dissertation's first hundred pages. Goffman then distills this ritual view of interaction in the remaining two hundred pages.

The fourth part of the thesis consists of ten chapters dissecting "the concrete units of conversational communication." It would be

[32] Gordon W. Allport and Philip E. Vernon, *Studies in Expressive Movements* (New York: Macmillan, 1933); Charles Blondel, *Introduction à la psychologie collective* (Paris: A. Colin, 1928).

[33] *CC*, 59–60.

[34] *CC*, 85–86.

[35] *CC*, 103.

[36] Goffman, "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 3 (1956): 473–502.

[37] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1915).

anachronistic to speak of "conversation analysis," but Goffman is almost there already. In pages replete both with data collected in situ and ad hoc concepts, he is going to build not a sociology of language but a sociology of speaking. Along the way, an enduring theme would develop: the idea that conversationalists must be present, physically but also psychologically. Goffman speaks of "accredited participation" (Chapter X) and discusses the ways to cover "improper lulls" and to display an appropriate "attention quota" (Chapter XI). Chapter XV deals with "safe supplies," i.e., "stores of messages that persons can fall back upon when they are in a position of having to maintain interplay and yet not having anything to say":[38] small talk, joking, or just watching the open fire. Chapter XVI is devoted to the "kinds of exclusion from participation," and Chapter XVII borrows the notion of "away" from Bateson and Mead's *Balinese Character*: "The participant keeps his face more or less in a position to convey attention signs to the speaker, but his thoughts and eyes turn inward or come to focus on some object in the room."[39]

[38] *CC*, 213.

All in all, those chapters lead to the notion of "involvement," developed in the dissertation's fifth and last part, but also in several later papers, such as Chapter III of *Behavior in Public Places* (1963) or Chapter 10 of *Frame Analysis* (1974).[40] One may venture to say that the notion is one of those secret keys that make Goffman's entire work more intelligible.

[39] *CC*, 232–33; Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1942).

[40] Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Involvement is the interface between the exploitative view of interaction developed in the dissertation's early chapters and the ritual view developed in the later chapters. In order to be "euphoric" (i.e., fluid), an interaction has to be a mix of calculation and deference, Goffman says in Chapter XVIII. Calculation without deference, and deference without calculation, will only lead to a dysphoric interaction, to the point of rupture. To quote the final words of Chapter XIX, precisely titled "Involvement":

> If rules of tact are followed, often boredom sets in. If rules of tact are broken, often embarrassment sets in. Apparently, a fundamental source of involvement consists of the slight infraction of tactful rules; either the infraction is committed in an unserious way or care is taken to bend the rule but not break it.[41]

[41] *CC*, 257.

The notion of involvement leads to Goffman's concept of *self*, which is crucial to understanding all of his work. In the last two chapters of his dissertation, he elaborates the idea of "projected selves." Goffman does not simply say that participant A wants to project a certain image of herself into other participants. He also does not say that participant A fits into a predefined role needing to be accomplished (as with a role in a play). To the contrary, the participant produces a

situational self, produced through their involvement in the interaction:

> At the moment of coming together, each participant—by his initial conduct and appearance—is felt by others to "project" a self into the situation. . . . The participant may be non-committal and indefinite; he may be passive, and he may act unwittingly. None the less, others will feel that he has projected into the situation an assumption as how he ought to be treated and hence, by implication, a conception of himself.[42]

[42] *CC*, 300.

In other words, A's self is actually what B thinks A projects into the situation. And they are going to maintain the initial understanding of their projected selves: "If the minute social system formed by persons during interplay is to be maintained, the definition of the situation is not to be destroyed."[43]

[43] *CC*, 302.

Goffman goes on to describe precisely the sorts of situations which ran temporarily out of control during his stay in Dixon. Those are the funny pages of the dissertation.[44] They are all based on some misunderstanding of the situation by one of the participants, which is followed by embarrassment on the parts of all those involved. Embarrassment would later appear in Goffman's work as an important concept, as in his "Embarrassment and Social Organization" (1956).[45]

[44] *CC*, 304–27.

[45] Goffman, "Embarrassment and Social Organization," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 3 (1956): 264–71.

The dissertation's final chapter appears, from its anodyne title ("Interpretations and Conclusions"), to promise mere summary. What is more interesting is the subtitle, "The Interaction Order." The phrase would reappear as the title of Goffman's final contribution, his 1982 ASA presidential address.[46] It was as if he had wanted to come full circle, as if he had been consistent and systematic throughout his intellectual career. Actually, he was far more consistent than many commentators have recognized. Many Goffman scholars take it as given that his work jumps from one topic to another uncommonly often. As this all too brief reading of the dissertation has shown, he was, on the contrary, quite orderly in planting seeds to be nurtured later. Orderliness turned out to be a key word for both his vision of the world and for his work. A final quote sums it up:

[46] Goffman, "The Interaction Order."

> In this study I have attempted to abstract from diverse comings-together in Dixon the orderliness that is common to all of them, the orderliness that obtains by virtue of the fact that those present are engaged in spoken communication. All instances of engagement-in-speech are seen as members of a single class of events, each of which exhibits the same kind of social order, giving rise to the same kind of social organization in response to the same kind of normative structures and the same kind of social control.[47]

[47] *CC*, 345.

## Return from the Field

In May 1951 Goffman left Baltasound for Edinburgh, where he completed his contract with the university, which ran until that fall. At some point during the summer, he was joined by Angelica, or "Sky," as she was called by her friends and relatives. They went to London and then to Paris, where they probably stayed for several months on rue de Lille, in the apartment that Sky's aunt (her mother's sister) kept as a pied-à-terre while she lived in Italy.[48] Goffman started to draft his dissertation in Paris—"the best place to write," as he put it many years later to Dean MacCannell.[49] Together they returned to Chicago in the spring of 1952.

In May, Goffman completed his "PhD Thesis Statement," a fifteen-page document overview of the dissertation to come.[50] By that time everything was in place, except that the focus was on the self rather than the interaction order, *viz* the tentative title: "The Social Rules Regarding Expression of Oneself to Others." Although Goffman explains that he went to Unst to "study the rules of conduct which islanders adhered to while engaged in social interaction with one another," he mentions that "after some data had been collected and partly analysed [*sic*], it became apparent that a shift in original emphasis would be required."[51] Is that the shift from a Warner-like community study to the study of a terra incognita? It would be difficult to say, but at least there is, for the first and last time, the recognition that a shift happened at some point. Goffman would go on to work on the dissertation for almost a year, but he at least took time to get married to Angelica Schuyler Choate in July 1952.

A year later he publicly defended his dissertation. Here is another small mystery: While the "PhD Thesis Statement" mentions Warner, Everett Hughes, and Daniel Horton as advisors, the dissertation's first page thanks Warner, Horton, and Anselm Strauss. Hughes has disappeared. What happened? Was he mad at Goffman for his disruptive dissertation, which literally hid field data under the rug? There is actually a simpler explanation for the mystery: Hughes was in Germany at the time, as a visiting professor at the University of Frankfurt. He may have been happy to escape from Goffman's defense in this most legitimate way, but we will never know.

The rule at the time was that the entire department faculty, and not just the committee, could ask questions during a dissertation defense. Apparently, there were rough questions. As Strauss has described, "I remember it was a warm spring day, and Goffman under the usual heavy attack had good control of himself, such good control that when a bead of perspiration rolled down his brow to his nose, he did nothing about it!"[52]

[48] Born Mary Phelps Jacob, nicknamed "Polly," she was given the sweet name of Caresse by her husband, Harry Crosby, in 1924. He committed suicide with his mistress in 1929 and his widow continued to run the Black Sun Press they had created together.

[49] Dean MacCannell, interview by the author, May 13, 1987.

[50] See Goffman, "Draft of PhD Thesis Statement" (unpublished manuscript, May 1952), 3–4, http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/documents/eg_thesis_statement_52.pdf.

[51] Goffman, "Draft of PhD Thesis Statement," 3–4.

[52] Anselm Strauss, letter to the author, October 13, 1985.

Goffman certainly got his degree, but for his entire life he maintained a grievance against his committee, who "did not understand what I was after," as he put it to me.[53] While he never published his dissertation as a book, he exploited it throughout his career, not so much in *Presentation of Self* (1959) as in *Behavior in Public Places* (1963). His final book, *Forms of Talk* (1981), may be seen as another late result of his conversational investigations, as I have argued above. There is now a major endeavor to be undertaken: to recast Goffman's oeuvre in the light of his now-published dissertation. A new generation of Goffman scholars is invited to get to work.

[53] Goffman, discussion with the author, April 1980.

*Erving Goffman*

# COMMUNICATION CONDUCT IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY

A MEDIASTUDIES.PRESS PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

*The University of Chicago*

# COMMUNICATION CONDUCT IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Division of the Social Sciences in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

Department of Sociology

*By*

Erving Goffman

*Chicago, Illinois*
*December, 1953*

*. . . there exists an immeasurable number of less conspicuous forms of relationship and kinds of interaction. Taken singly, they may appear negligible. But since in actuality they are inserted into the comprehensive and, as it were, official social formations, they alone produce society as we know it. To confine ourselves to the large social formations resembles the older science of anatomy with its limitation to the major, definitely circumscribed organs such as heart, liver, lungs, and stomach, and with its neglect of the innumerable, popularly unnamed or unknown tissues. Yet without these, the more obvious organs could never constitute a living organism. On the basis of the major social formations—the traditional subject matter of social science—it would be similarly impossible to piece together the real life of society as we encounter it in our experience. Without the interspersed effects of countless minor syntheses, society would break up into a multitude of discontinuous systems. Sociation continuously emerges and ceases and emerges again. Even where its eternal flux and pulsation are not sufficiently strong to form organizations proper, they link individuals together. That people look at one another and are jealous of one another; that they exchange letters or dine together; that irrespective of all tangible interests they strike one another as pleasant or unpleasant; that gratitude for altruistic acts makes for inseparable union; that one asks another man after a certain street, and that people dress and adorn themselves for one another—the whole gamut of relations that play from one person to another and that may be momentary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, ephemeral or of grave consequence (and from which these illustrations are quite casually chosen), all these incessantly tie men together. Here are the interactions among the atoms of society. They account for all the toughness and elasticity, all the color and consistency of social life, that is so striking and yet so mysterious.*

Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt B. Wolff (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 9–10.

# *Introduction*

doi

This is a report on a study of conversational interaction. It is based on twelve months of field work carried on between December, 1949, and May, 1951, in a small community in Great Britain.[1] The community is located on a small island, one in an isolated group of islands that supports a subsistence rural economy.

The aim of the research was to isolate and record recurrent practices of what is usually called face-to-face interaction. The research was not designed to determine thoroughly or precisely the history of any interaction practice, the frequency and place of its occurrence, the social function which it performed, or even the range of persons among whom it occurred. The project was concerned with a more elementary question, namely, the kinds of types of practices which occurred.

I was especially concerned with those social practices whose formulation and analysis might help to build a systematic framework useful in studying interaction throughout our society. As the study progressed, conversational interaction came to be seen as one species of social order. The social order maintained through conversation seemed to consist of a number of things: the working in together of messages from different participants; the management by each participant of the information about himself conveyed in his messages; the show of agreement maintained by participants; and other things.

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

During the full period of study, an effort was made to guide participation in two directions. First, I tried to participate in as many as possible of the different situations in which members of the community entered into face-to-face interaction with another (e.g., meals, types of work, schooling, shop-loitering, weddings, parties, socials, funerals), and to do this with as many different sets of participants as

[1] I am very grateful to the Department of Social Anthropology and the Committee on Social Science Research of the University of Edinburgh, who financed and sponsored the study, and to Professors W. Lloyd Warner, Donald Horton, and Anselm Strauss of the University of Chicago, who served as thesis advisors

possible. The aim here was to ensure experience with the full range of variation. Secondly, I participated regularly and for an extended period of time in a few daily and weekly social occasions, each time with the same set of participants. Here the aim was threefold: to minimize for at least some islanders the inhibitory effect of having a stranger present; to ensure observation of the kinds of interaction crises which occur infrequently but which throw light on conduct which occurs regularly; and, finally, to ensure observation of occasions in which factors usually present were for some reason absent, thus providing a makeshift way of experimentally varying one factor while keeping others constant. My attempt to ensure range and depth of participation was facilitated by two fortunate social facts: much of the recreational life in the community is formally organized as an undertaking open to any resident of the island, and there is a strong tradition of neighborly assistance with farm tasks, whereby offers to help are readily accepted and give to the helper a traditional right to eat a day's meals with those he has helped.

During the first few months of the study, it was possible for me to take a running record at large-scale gatherings, noting down verbatim bits of conversation and gestures, and sketching ecological movements, as these events occurred. Later, and especially in the case of small-scale gatherings, recording of this kind would have been considered offensive, improper, and inconsistent with relationships I had established. It then became necessary to record daily observations at the end of each day or at moments of privacy during the day.

While in the field, I tried to record happenings between persons regardless of how uninteresting and picayune these events seemed then to be. The assumption was that all interaction between persons took place in accordance with certain patterns, and hence, with certain exceptions, there was no *prima facie* reason for thinking that one event was a better or worse expression of this patterning than any other event. I want to confess, however, that I found indiscriminate recording very difficult to do, especially in situations where a written note of the event could not be made until some hours after the event had occurred. There was a constant temptation to record only those events which found at the time a neat place in my conceptual organization, either as conforming or radically disconfirming instances. (Thus, as the conceptual organization changed, so also did the kinds of facts that were recorded.) There was also a temptation to concentrate on those vents which struck me as bizarre, dramatic, or entertaining—events likely to mark a reader feel that the data were interesting and meaningful. Mechanical devices such as tape recorders and motion-picture cameras, or rigid techniques

such as time-sampling, would have provided a desirable check on these recording biases. These corrective devices, however, were not practical for social, economic, and technical reasons.

When a spate of interaction is observed in a small isolated community, it is possible for the observer to place the event in a wider context of information concerning the occupation, socio-economic status, friendship and kinship ties, and personality characteristics of the participants. The observer obtains part of this information by direct observation, part by properly timed offhand inquiry, and part of it is thrust upon him by members of the community in order that he may participate without awkwardness in conversational interaction which makes no sense without such information. Therefore it was not necessary to carry on formal interviews, or to employ schedules and questionnaires in a systematically way, in order to collect basic social facts. Nor were these formal techniques employed in order to collect data that might bear directly upon conversational interaction. Members of the community seemed to have few notions of a well-formulated kind concerning social interaction, and I came to feel, by the hints conveyed to me when I first settled down in the community, that residents would not readily accept as a friend and neighbour someone who asked formal questions about interactions or someone who showed an unnatural interest in matters of the kind. In order to observe people off their guard, you must first win their trust. Had the island culture been the kind in which it is possible for outsiders to ask odd sorts of questions, I still could not have employed questionnaires because I did not know about interaction then, either from my own experience or from the literature then available, to ask the right questions. In order to learn what the right questions were, I had to become taken for granted by the community to a degree and in a way that made it unsuitable for me to ask these questions. Interviewing was carried on however, on matters related to the history of the community and to its civic and economic organization, these being matters which the islanders felt were proper subjects for interviews. And interviewing was carried on wherever and whenever questions could be disguised as the ordinary curiosity of an ordinary outsider.

I personally witnessed almost all the behavior and events described in this report. There was, therefore, no need to make use of the sophisticated techniques employed by students who study what people do by carefully analyzing what they say they do. However, I cannot prove that any event recorded in my field notes had, for those who participated in it, the subjective significance and meaning that I claim it had. I cannot even prove that any particular event had the outward objective form that I attribute to it. In order to ensure that a wide range of interactive situations were observed in their natural

contexts, and in order to ensure that some interactions were observed deeply and intimately, as an ordinary participant would observe them, it was necessary to sacrifice other kinds of assurances and controls. Nevertheless, a reasonable number of checks upon observation did seem available.

By being present with some—and only some—of the participants before and after an observed interaction occurred, it was possible to confirm and disconfirm my own interpretations and reactions by asking leading questions and by conversations of the preparatory and post-mortem kind. Confirmation and dis confirmation were also obtained by participants in the kind of furtive communication which occur during an interaction—communication of the kind that ordinarily allows participants to convey secretly an unofficial running comment and judgment on the proceedings in which they are officially involved.

Further, I was allowed to participate informally to the degree to which islanders could rely on me to observe correctly what was occurring in the interaction. Errors on my part were corrected by means of informal sanctions administered by members of the community themselves; correct observation was rewarded by increasing permission to participate informally and by increasing capacity to know what was likely to happen next and to react appropriately. To participate in interaction without causing others to feel embarrassed and ill at ease requires that one exercise, almost unthinkingly, constant tact and care concerning the feelings of others; to exercise this discretion it is necessary to perceive correctly the indications others give of what they are feeling.

Also, the study was concerned with communication; unlike factors such as attitudes, motives, allegiances, etc., there is a sense in which this factor cannot function at all unless the meaning intended by the actor is similar to the meaning that his observers place upon his acts.

Finally, a constant check upon observations was provided by the informational conditions that prevail in a small isolated community. The observations made during a particular interaction could be placed into and checked against a context of information concerning the social reputation of each of the participants, their momentarily inactive social roles, and—since most islanders played out the full circle of their social relationships within the geographical confines of the island—the other kinds of interactions in which they participated. In fact, the availability of this background information, coupled with the relatively wide range of interaction that occurs in a community, provided the two reasons for seeking an isolated community as a convenient place in which to study social interaction.

While these several checks upon observation were available, it was not, of course, claimed that statements made in this study have the kind of reliability that is to be found in counts that are made of durable physical objects that other students can go back and recount. Since this study was concerned with the kinds of things that occurred, and not with more advanced problems such as measures of frequency or intensity, the observational technique employed seemed adequate for the purpose.

The framework developed here attempts to cover a range of data systemically and uniform all. This means that the preliminary terms have been designed to lay the foundation for terms that come later, and therefore that these preliminary terms may have very little interest in their own right. This also means that special terms have had to be given to types of events which are almost but not quite covered by terms existing in the literature already. The effort to be systematic has also caused me to make formal and ponderous explications of notions that form part of common sense understanding of social events. I would like to apologize in advance for these sources of irritation, but I do not see how a current study of interaction can be made without first defining one's terms. However, while there is an inescapable need to define one's terms, it was often not possible, it must be admitted, to do this in a satisfactory way, or to refrain in certain places from falling back on common sense language.

This report attempts to exclude information which might positively identify the community in which the study took place. All names have been changed; sources of historical and statistical information have not been identified. This is not a study *of* a community; it is a study that occurred, *in* a community, of behavior with which no living person ought to be publicly identified.

The study falls into five parts. The first part consists of a brief view of the social life of the community, with special reference to certain recurrent situations for which a relatively extensive interaction record was kept. Here an attempt is made to provide a context for some of the events described later, while at the same time not prejudicing the anonymity of the community. The second part outlines, very tentatively, a conceptual model for viewing interaction as a form of social order. The third part deals with the management of information-about-self. Part four deals with interaction units. The final part deals with conduct of persons while engaged in conversation. The ratio of substantive material to analytical discussion is low in Part Two and increases with each succeeding part.

Except for the introductory chapters (I and II), the beginning of each chapter is phrased in terms of a general discussion of particular communication concepts, and only later in each chapter are field data

introduced. This stylistic device is employed as a way of rendering the data easy for use in the development of a general communication framework. In consequence, a false impression is sometimes given that the field data has been brought in as an afterthought, merely to illustrate concepts earlier arrived at. I should like to make it quite clear that the terms and concepts employed in this study came after and not before the facts. The framework of terms presented in this study was developed in order to identify regularities observed in the communication conduct of the islanders, or in order to make explicit the assumptions which seemed to underlie some of these identifications of regularities.

# Part One

## *The Context*

# *Chapter I: Dixon*

doi

More than a hundred miles off the coast of Britain there is a cluster of islands containing about twenty thousand inhabitants. These persons are supported by a poor economy of small-scale sheep farming and fishing. Less than ten per cent of the five hundred square miles of land on the islands is under cultivation, and, except for home-knitting for a luxury market, almost nothing is manufactured. Until recently, the population had been declining very rapidly. The policy of the national government, for various reasons, has been a protective one, helping to maintain British standards of living by means of agricultural subsidies, statutes governing the rental price of small holdings, and an extremely high *per capita* payment to the islands for upkeep of required social services.

The persons who live on the islands are drawn together by a distinctive dialect, a rich cultural heritage, and what amounts to a thousand years of shared historical identity and development. The name for the cluster of islands—let us call it Bergand—is the name that an inhabitant of any one of the particular islands in the cluster is likely to identity himself by. Bergand has been under British rule for only three centuries. Until the last war, respectable Englishmen thought of Bergand as a source of seamen and servants, and the islands enjoyed—along with many other clusters of people in Britain—the status of a subordinate minority group. These factors making for distinctiveness are, of course, reinforced by the natural barrier of water between the mainland of Britain and the islands. In many ways, then, Berganders form a society unto themselves.

A fourth of the population of Bergand is concentrated in one town, hereafter called Capital City, which is located on the largest island in the cluster. There is a twice-weekly steamboat contact between the mainland of Britain and Bergand, as well as daily air service. These contacts with the outer world are tunneled through Capital City, and all formal lines of communication on the islands also lead into this point. Capital City is also the center for institutions which serve the whole cluster of islands, and in general it has something of the

ethos and something of the role of a national capital. Fashions travel outward from this town to all the islands in the cluster; people on the road to success or retirement travel in the other direction.

The island on which the study took place is a rectangular piece of rock nine miles long and four miles wide; it is covered by a thin skin of poor soil. The end link in a chain of islands, it is cut off from its only neighbor by a channel of fast water a mile wide. The island is linked with Capital City by a thrice-weekly boat service and a thrice-weekly ferry-overland service.

The typical farm holding an the island consists of five or ten acres under intensive cultivation, a similar number of acres of improved grassland, and hill grazing-rights for fifty or sixty sheep. Subsistence holdings of this kind may be called crofts. The average crofter has four or five cows and a score of ponies. The island grows not quite enough grass to feed the stock and not quite enough vegetables to feed the inhabitants. Some milk has to be imported for the school lunches. The principal sources of cash income are typical for the island cluster: the export of sheep and cattle tor slaughter; the export of raw wool, hand-knitted goods, and work ponies; government payments in the form of agricultural subsidies, pensions, and unemployment relief. The size of individual holdings is limited by government policy—policy that is apparently designed to encourage land cultivation by individual family units. There are only three agricultural holdings on the island that make use of a full-time hired hand.

There are about three hundred dwelling units in use on the island. The division is based on ecological clustering, trade area, and conscious identification. Each community is centered in a fan-shaped way around a nucleus of service institutions. Each nucleus or service center is located on a part of the coast line that can serve as a harbor, and contains a community hall, a post office, a school, one or two churches, three or four stores, and a relatively dense grouping of houses. The three center points of service form a line, not a triangle, because of the narrow shape of the island. This study took place in the middle community, hereafter called Dixon. The communities lying to the north and south of Dixon will be called, respectively, Northend and Southend. For their size these communities are probably the most isolated in Britain.

Fifty years ago there were additional foci of settlement. There is some evidence that some of these contained local concentrations of extended kin. Today these settlements can be clearly seen in Northend, where economic and social consolidation is not yet complete. In general, a rapid shift of internal population is bringing persons closer and closer to the three centers of service, so that now most persons live within two miles of one of them.

In certain ways the center of service in Dixon is a center for the other two communities as well. The only usable freight pier on the island is located in the long narrow bay that serves as Dixon's harbor. Coal and gasoline supplies for the island are located at this pier and delivered from it. The only bakery on the island is attached to the principal Dixon store. This store is of the "general" kind; it is the largest on the island and to some extent provides an informal social center for all three communities. The island's chief business family, its sole practising doctor, and its resident "squire" all live in Dixon. A school that will serve all the secondary school students on the island is coming into operation in Dixon. Neither of the other two communities plays a role of like importance for the island as a whole.

The three hundred residents of Dixon are all white, Protestant (of three different denominations), and most of them have lived on the island for as many generations as those without special interest can trace. Regardless of occupation, almost all the residents are sufficiently rural in spirit to keep at least a garden of vegetables, some chickens, and a few sheep.

* * * * *

The deepest social division in Dixon—as perhaps in most small British communities—is the one which separates persons who have gone to "Public Schools" from those who have gone to free government schools.[1] On the whole, persons of the kind that go to Public Schools think of themselves as being different from and superior to other kinds of Britons; in many areas of social intercourse other kinds of Britons (hereafter called "commoners") overtly accept the low status that Public School persons proffer to them. In country districts, where members of one class are likely to have known members of the other class all their lives, the division is often phrased, as it will be occasionally in this study, as one between "gentry" and "locals."

In Dixon there are two families of the gentry class; the only other family of this class on the island lives in Southend. There is the "Alexander" family, whose forebears came to Dixon over two hundred years ago from the mainland of Britain. They have been the principal resident squire of the island ever since. The second Public School family consists of "Dr. Wren" and his wife, who moved to Dixon from the mainland of Britain only a few months before the study began. Dr. Wren is the only practising doctor on the island. All the islanders are registered with him under the British free medical-service plan. He works and is worked very hard. The Alexanders and the Wrens, and the Public School family in Southend, the "Huntleys," form a friendship group. With certain limits and variations,

[1] Public Schools in Britain form a national training system. Their pupils are recruited from families all over the country who have high socio-economic status or aspirations in that direction. These schools provide a foundation for a nation-wide network of "personal contacts." They also foster a single set of manners, attitudes, and speech habits which can be easily distinguished from the many different local patterns of behavioral that are possessed by rural and urban persons of other social classes.

they maintain the style of life and the social distance from locals that is characteristic of the gentry everywhere in Britain.

The stereotype that the gentry have of the locals seems to be similar to the one that prevails throughout Britain. The gentry, when by themselves, spend a good deal of their time recounting the latest action of a crofter which shows how impossible crofters really are. This sort of talk is accompanied by much hilarity and by the applications to the crofters of a standard of judgment which condones the behavior of the crofters on the ground that nothing better is to be expected of persons who are not quite human. Even when crofters referred to are ones whom the speaker knows well, the general term "they" may be used with a special intonation suggesting that the term "they" is not quite a human term of reference. Frequently when a specific name is mentioned it is given a special pronunciation or twist to suggest that the person does not qualify to be referred to by ordinarily statement of name. Sometimes the gentry refer to crofters (in their absence) as the natives or locals. One woman, who had lived all her life on the island, in talking to newly-arrived class-members said,"They're awfully good-tempered, you know, you have to say that about them." In her absence, another member of the gentry said, "She's awfully good with them, you know; she goes fishing with them, and goes into their kitchens and cooks with them."

Approximately two thirds of the families in the commoner class derive their principal source of income from crafting. The remaining sources of main income derive in part from the County and National governments (in the form of wages for the maintenance of roads, schools, postal services, vital statistics registration, and customs inspections, and in the form of unemployment benefits and pensions), and in part from private enterprise (in the form of wages and profits for shop owners and workers, quarry workers, lorry drivers, bakers, hotel operators, skilled craftsmen, and fishermen).

The commoners in Dixon (as apparently elsewhere in the island cluster) seem to be a patient, mannerly people with a great deal of self-control. Towards outsiders they show considerable social reserve; towards fellow-commoners who live on the island they show equalitarianism respect and a deep sense of mutual concern.

The "household" papers to be the basic social unit; while it usually contains a single immediate family, it tends to be regarded as the proper home for lineal and affinal kin who are in need of a place at which to work or in which to live. Members of a household show a great deal of kindly solicitude and affection for each other, regardless of age, sex, or kinship relation.

There are two wider social units based on the household. Each household has a "neighbourhood circle," consisting of the four or

five crofts that immediately surround it. Each household also has a "kin circle," consisting of the close relations, affinal and lineal, of the male and female heads of the household, excluding those relations who are on "bad terms" with the household. Both of these social units—sometimes separately, sometimes together—constitute an organization of mutual aid and informal social intercourse. Both circles are expected to play a role in funerals and in work crises, such as harvest.

Within the commoner class there is a growing differentiation in style of life between those who operate small crofts and those who have other kinds of full-time employment. A locally-recruited middle class is emerging, based on families that have not engaged in full-time crafting for one or two generations. Commoners show a strong resistance, however, to the tendency for this cultural split to become a consciously recognized social one. Functional explanations for this resistance can be easily suggested. The social guild between Public School people and the commoners is sufficiently great to embarrass any division that may occur within the commoner class. This is reinforced by the strong tendency for Public School people to treat all commoners in the same way, for apparently the gentry feel that once a single informal bridge is created to the commoners, the whole pattern of social distance and superordination will collapse. Kin circles are stressed as units of informal social life, and these prevent recognition of the potential class line by cutting across it. Further, an important element in the self-conception of Dixon commoners is based on their beliefs concerning the difference between natives of the island cluster and all other Britons. This mode of self-judgment undermines the attempt of some commoners to construct a basic image of themselves in terms of invidious distinctions between themselves and other commoners. Finally, the chief merchant family of the island has, up to the present, held itself apart "socially" from the commoners, thus failing to play the important role in class formation that families of this kind typically play in an island cluster.

In Dixon there are two families which are not placed socially either with the commoners or with the Public School class. One of these families consists of the island's previous doctor, now a much-respected, aged, and ailing man; his son; and his daughter. Both daughter and son are in their early middle years. Both are unmarried.

The other marginal family, the "Allens," are the chief merchants on the island. The family came as ordinary commoners from another island in the cluster three generations ago, and for two generations they have been the most economically powerful family on the island. One branch of the family ran a larger sheep farm at the time of the

study but has since moved to the mainland of Britain. The remaining unit of the family consists of a man, his wife, and a son, "Ted," in his twenties. They own the principal shops in all three communities, the pier, the bakery, the mineral rights for the island. They have the coal agency for the island. They hire two craftsmen to build boats. They operated a woolen mill for a time, with the aid of a son-in-law. They give full-time employment to about thirty persons in the community. The potentially autocratic position of the Allen family is not felt nearly so strongly as it might be. Several explanations can be suggested. Government regulations regarding employment and prices provide one kind of limitation; alternate channels of supply (especially mail-order) provide another. In addition, the recent generation of Allens seems to have genuine paternalistic feelings of responsibility toward the economic welfare of the islanders.

It should be added that the crofters, on the whole, seem to approve of the Allens. Stories are often told and retold of the times that the Allens kept men at work even thought it had to be "made" work, of the time they helped to re-establish a family that had been burned out, of the fact that their prices may not be low but that they are not higher than prices in other places, of the fact that the Allens have invested in industry which brought employment for the men of the island but losses to the owners. Less explicitly, there is the feeling that the Allens have chosen to remain on the lonely island, and that the gratifying present relative poverty of the squire is due to the financial cunning of the previous Allen generation. This positive attitude seems to prevail even though the social distance that the Allens have maintained for two generations from their fellow-islanders is not usual on Bergand islands.

The Allen family has always recruited wives and friends from outside the local commoner group. For the last two generations they have maintained the style of life of Public School people. Commoners treat the Allens as if this family were of the Public School class, and the three families in that class are on intimate "social" terms with the Allens and treat them almost as equals. It is interesting to note that Ted Allen is so far an exception to this social pattern. He is treated with social acceptance by the Public School class, while at the same time he seeks and finds social equality and intimacy with some commoners in Dixon. His orientation towards commoners seems to be both cause and effect of the emerging middle class.

In addition to commoners and Public School people, there are certain other categories of persons who play a role in the social life of Dixon. Throughout the year, but especially from May to September, flushing boats dock at the Dixon pier, remaining from an hour to a week. Crews from the boats buy supplies at the local stores and

exchange fish for money or fresh eggs with local residents. Also, tourists come to the community during the summer to fish for trout or watch birds for a week or two, or to spend one evening of a steamboat excursion on a remote and rugged island. Finally, throughout the year commercial travellers visit the island to make a round of its stores, and officials come on government business.

* * * * *

This study is mainly concerned with events which occurred in the social life of commoners that are native to Dixon. The study is particularly concerned with three of the social settings in which events of this kind regularly occurred: socials, billiards, and the hotel.

## Socials

Every year from September to March a social is held in the Dixon community hall approximately every second week. Each social is advertised in the stores and post office of all three communities. In most cases, anyone who reads the advertisements is free to come. Bus service from central points all over the island is provided two or three times during the evening. Attendance varies from sixty to two hundred persons, most of whom live in Dixon. Northend and Southend hold similar fortnightly socials. A third of the population of Dixon attends socials regularly. Direct observations were made at almost all of the socials held in Dixon and Northend during the twelve months of study.

In Dixon (as in the other two communities on the island) two formal voluntary associations exist which provide committee machinery for most of the community undertakings. There is the "Dixon Workingmen's Association," which owns the community hall and is open for membership to all male residents of the community, and the "Women's Rural Institute," which is open to all resident females in the community. The management of a social usually involves formal cooperation by both of these associations.

The pattern of organization for socials is well established and helps to solve the organizational problems for many of the other large-scale social undertakings that occur in the community. The first part of a social consists of planned entertainment, starting at eight o'clock in the evening and lasting for about three hours. A short intermission is observed for tea and buns, and then the second part of the social, a dance, is held. The dance lasts until about two-thirty in the morning, depending, it is said, on the energy and spirit of the dancers. Admission price for the whole evening is usually two

shillings and six pence, but separate tickets at a lower rate may be bought for the entertainment or the dancing.

The entertainment part of a social usually consists of "progressive" whist played for seven or eight small prizes. Twice a year instead of whist there is a "bring and buy sale" where contributed goods, usually home-produced, are auctioned. Twice a year the entertainment is provided by a "concert" consisting of a short play, vocal and instrumental solos, and recitations—all performed by local talent. Persons from six to eighty participate actively in all of these forms of entertainment.

The dance part of the social consists (with certain seasonal exceptions) exclusively of "country-style" dancing: "quadrilles," "lancers," "gay gordons," "St. Bernard's waltz," "old fashioned waltz," and "Boston two-step." Almost all the dancers are between thirteen and forty-five, although it is expected that persons outside this age range will watch the dancing from a single row of benches that line the walls of the dance floor. Music from the hall stage is provided by a piano and an accordion or violin. Musicians are recruited from the audience on a volunteer basis; in one evening three or four different sets of players may be used. Intermission teas are served once or twice during the evening's dance. As the evening wears on, the age range narrows until persons of courting age are almost the only ones that remain.

In Dixon there are some large-scale social occasions at which attendance may be regarded as an obligation and responsibility: the annual Christmas party and concert; the two or three "church socials" held each year in each of the churches; the semi-annual "bulb show" of flowers; the annual summer regatta and annual "gala day." Public School people join with the commoners in these kinds of occasions. However only commoners and occasionally an island visitor appear at ordinary socials. On the whole, socials seem to express and consolidate the feeling that all native commoners are socially accessible to and socially equal with one another, and that no one will desert the hard life of the island or their identification with crofters. Lately there has come to be a twice-monthly showing of a 16 mm. motion picture, but attendance seems more to divide the community—into those who go and those who do not—than to integrate the community.

It should be added, perhaps, that elaborate community machinery for carrying out community-wide social events is not given allegiance by some members of the community. Many of the male crofters take the view that they are too tired or too busy to attend the socials. On the whole, it is those of crofters class who have non-crafting sources of income who form the hard core of attendants and officers. There is

thus one community composed of persons who have gone to school with each other, known each other all their lives, intermarried, and another one, set within the first, composed of all those who are "active" in formally organized community affairs. In certain respects, each of these communities gives the appearance of being the only one.

## Billiards

In the Dixon community hall there is a room called the "reading-room." It is about twenty feet wide and thirty feet long, and one wall is shelved with about four hundred books. About twenty-five persons in Dixon regularly make use of this library

In the center of the room is a standard three-quarter length billiard table. The table top is geared to an axle, and with the top turned over the table is used for most of the formal meetings that are held in the community. Except for the cushions, which are almost dead, the table is in good condition. There are four cues, one of them short, one of them cracked, and a set of snooker and billiard balls. Snooker is rarely played. English billiards is played in accordance with standard rules for this game. Billiards is officially open to any member of the Dixon Workingmen's Association and any guests of a member. According to a formal rule that is often broken, the billiard season is from October to May, and play is held on Monday and Saturday nights from seven to eleven-thirty. At the end of each evening of play, each player deposits three pence for every game he has played, in order to defray the cost of fuel, lights, and servicing on the part of the hall caretaker.

Observations were made during almost every evening of billiards that occurred during the period of field work. During this period approximately fifteen persons came to be recognized as billiard players. Half of these were steady players who could be expected to appear almost every night that billiards was held; the other half consisted of occasional players who spent two or three nights a month at the game. Most of the players were of the oldest fully-active generation, from about fifty to sixty-five years old. A third of the players were of the youngest generation that was fully active in community life, that is, persons in their late twenties and early thirties. One or two players fell between the two age groups.

It was apparent that those who have acquired the habit of playing billiards in Dixon do not represent a socially haphazard selection from the total population of the community. The players do not share a particular social characteristic that is not also shared by some non-players. The *set* of characteristics which most of them possessed,

however, was almost exclusively theirs: residential proximity to the hall; full-time employment other than crofting; official role in the Dixon Workingmen's Association.

Billiards in Dixon can be understood in terms of the social functions it performs for the community. It provides a place where some of the organizational business of the community can be carried on under conditions which ensure informality. It provides an opportunity for some of the older community leaders to give informal training to some of the future community leaders. It ensures a wide channel of communication of a point of strong solidarity between the oldest and the youngest active adult generation.

It is interesting to note that the managers of Allen stores in Dixon and Southend are players. Ted Allen and the chief assistant of the Allen store in Dixon also play. All four of these persons play regularly except the manager of the Southend Allen Store. In general it appears that billiards provides one of the ways in which the Allen business organization ensures lines of solidarity with the commoner class—the class from which it draws its employees and customers.

In this study, attention is not directed to the social functions of billiards for Dixon. The study is more directly concerned with aspects of the game that can be described with very little reference to anything beyond the room in which the game is played.

## The Hotel

In Dixon there are two hotels, the only ones on the island. One of the hotels is very little used and used only in the summer. In this study no attention is focused on it. The other hotel has fourteen guest rooms which are filled by tourists from the mainland of Britain during July and August. This hotel is kept open all year round for the overnight convenience of occasional travelling salesmen and governing agents. It has also been used during the winter by families of the Public School class whose houses were being remodeled. It is referred to in this study as "the hotel."

The hotel is owned, operated, and lived in by the "Tates," a couple of the island-born commoner class in their early middle years. During the busy summer season a staff of six is maintained, all of whom usually live on the premises during the period of their employment. During the long winter there will be no hired staff, or a staff of one or two maids, depending on whether or not the hotel has any semi-permanent winter guests.

The hotel was once the home of the Allen family. During the last war the Royal Air Force rented the building from its present owners and added an extension for use as a dormitory. Some years ago the

Allen family ran a hotel in Dixon, where Mrs. Tate received some experience in hotel management. The Allens no longer operate a hotel. The Tate hotel now represents perhaps the biggest operation undertaken on the island by commoners; its success is a symbol for many persons on the island of the potential ability of commoners.

Mr. and Mrs. Tate play leading roles in the organized social life of the community. They also play a role in the maintenance of solidarity between Dixon and Northend, since Mrs. Tate was born and raised in Northend; she is still known as a "Northend lass."

It is customary for the leading belles of Dixon to spend a summer or two at the hotel in the capacity of kitchen maid, upstairs maid, or waitress. The pay is good, and the girls frequently claim that they take the work mainly in order to earn money for especially attractive clothes. For most of the twelve months of study, two of these girls, "Jean Andrews" and "Alice Simon," worked at the hotel. Both were in their early twenties. During the summer the hotel always hires a Dixon commoner, "Bob Hunter," as cook; he is about thirty years old, unmarried, and lives during the winter on his family's croft. For the last few years, Jean Andrews, Alice Simon, and Bob Hunter have formed the core of the hired hotel staff.

The hotel itself plays an important role in the community. During the summer the hotel buys a great deal of food from the local stores and nearby crofters and is important economically in this way. It plays a major role in maintaining Dixon as a practical place for tourist interest. The annual influx of tourists serves, apparently, as comforting evidence to local residents that Dixon has a place of value in Britain. The immediate presence of middle and upper-class guests serves the entire staff as a learning situation for approved patterns of conduct. The hotel serves in this way as a center of diffusion of higher class British values.

During the first two months of the study, Dr. Wren and his wife were permanent guests of the hotel. They were waiting for the county to purchase and remodel the building that was to become their house. During these two months I stayed in the hotel in the capacity of a guest and took my meals with the Wrens and all occasional hotel guests at a small dining room table. When the Wrens moved, I moved into a vacant cottage, returning to the hotel kitchen for meals with the staff. I ate one meal with them almost every weekday for six months. During a summer I also worked part time in the hotel scullery as second dishwasher. It was therefore possible to make a long series of mealtime observations both as a guest of the hotel and as a member of its kitchen staff, in this way getting two different views of the same process.

# Part Two

## *The Sociological Model*

# *Chapter II: Social Order and Social Interaction*

doi

In the study of social life, it is common to take as a basic model the concept of social order and to analyze concrete behavior by focusing on the ways in which it conforms to and deviates from this model. In the present study, I assume that conversational interactions between concrete persons who are in each other's immediate presence is a species of social order and can be studied by applying the model of social order to it.[1] The applicability of this model to conversational interaction is suggested below. In this and in other chapters dealing with the conceptual framework, conversation in Western society is assumes as the data for which the framework is to be relevant.

[1] The classification of social interaction as a species of social organization or social order derives from Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951). My view of the criteria for social order derives mainly from Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

## The Model

1. Social order is found where the differentiated activity of different actors is integrated into a single whole, allowing thereby for the conscious or unconscious realization of certain overall ends or functions.

In the case of conversational interaction, the acts that are integrated together are acts of communication, or messages. The flow of messages during a conversation is continuous and is uninterrupted by competing messages, and any one message from a participant is sufficiently meaningful and acceptable to the other participants to constitute a starting point for the next message. Continuous and uninterrupted interchange of message is the work flow of conversational interaction.

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

This criterion of social order can be applied without modification or elaboration to the case of conversational interaction.

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

The relation between conversational order and the sanctions that regulate it seems somewhat different from the relation between other types of social order and the sanctions which regulate them. Unlike other kinds of social order, the sanctions employed in conversational order seem to be largely of the kind where moral approval or disapproval is immediately expressed and felt; little stress seems to be placed on sanctions of a more instrumental kind. Further, in conversational order, even more than in other social orders, the problem is to employ a sanction which will not destroy by its mere enactment the order which it is designed to maintain.

4. Any concrete social order must occur in a wider social context. The flow of action between the order and its social environment must come under regulation that is integrated into the order as such. Maintenance of this regulated relation depends on the maintenance of social order in the environment. On the whole, the stress here is on the negative sanctions enjoining non-interference, as opposed to the positive sanctions enjoining specific contributions exchanged between the order and its environment.[2]

This element in social order can be applied directly to the case of conversational interaction.

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

In the case of conversational interaction, weakening of rules results in disorganization that is usually experienced as embarrassment. The occurrence of embarrassment marks a point of confusion and disorientation; participants sense a false note in the situation. Embarrassed participants are said to be flustered, ill at ease, or to have lost countenance.

[2] This factor has recently been described by George C. Humans in *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), under the term "external systems." See especially pp. 86–94.

6. A person who breaks rules is an offender; his breaking of them is an offense. He who breaks rules continually is a deviant.

In the case of conversational interaction, he who breaks the rules is said to be *gauche*, *de trop*, or out of place. Offenses, or in other words acts which cause embarrassment, are said to be bricks, howlers, *gaffes*, *faux pas*, boners. (These acts, incidentally, provide us with an opportunity for studying the kinds of assumptions which underlie proper interaction behavior. These infractions of proper behavior provide us with a sort of situational news for directing our attention to the requirements of ordinary situations which would otherwise have gone unnoticed.) If an actor continuously breaks interaction rules, and especially if he does this in a wide variety of different interaction situations, we say he is a bore, a hopeless person, impossible. In the present study, deviants of this persistent kind will be called faulty persons.

7. When a rule is broken, the offender ought to feel guilty or remorseful, and the offended ought to feel righteously indignant.

In the case of conversational interaction, the guilt that the offender feels is described as shame. Shame will also be felt by those participants who have identified themselves with the offender, or who have defined themselves as personally responsible to theirs for the maintenance of order. Those who have been offended feel shocked, affronted, impatient.

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

In the case of conversational interaction, there is a set of adaptations to offense which protects the offended but which, in doing this, destroys the interaction order in which the protective action occurs. Thus, offended participants can react by withdrawing from the offender, or by ignoring him completely, or by shifting radically the understanding and social distances upon which the interaction is based. (All of these lines of adaption, incidentally, must rely upon the offender or improper actor to behave in a proper way as an object for these kinds of action; otherwise they can note be applied to him.)

Usually none of the drastic lines of action mentioned above are employed. Participants usually respond with toleration and forbearance to acts which offend against the interaction order. However tentative this accommodative response may be, it allows the interaction to be maintained, while corrections, if they are to be applied, can

be applied in a tactful way without destroying the interaction itself.[3] Accommodative behavior takes the form of apparent acceptance as appropriate of the behavior of others; it gives rise to what might be called a working acceptance. Injuries to the working acceptance are avoided by means of protective strategies and haled by means of corrective strategies. Exercise of the strategies may be called tact.

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

In the case of conversational interaction, individuals employ what might be called gain strategies. These designs for action allow the individual to alter the working acceptance to suit his own ends, providing the alteration is sufficiently small or concealed so as not to jeopardize the working acceptance itself. Usually the strategist, in these cases, is interested in raising the definition that others present have of him and/or in lowering the definition they have of someone else who is present. In these situations, the working acceptance ceases to be an end or a means of action and becomes instead a framework of limiting conditions and boundaries of actions.

* * * * *

As a model, the concept of social order perhaps does not lead us to give sufficient stress to a crucial characteristic of conversational interaction, namely, the forbearance maintenance of a working acceptance. Let us explore this characteristic for a moment.

When persons find it necessary to exercise forbearance they usually feel hostile and resentful towards the person who requires this treatment. Those who forbear must accept, for a moment anyway, a public threat to interaction norms as well as to the evaluation of self which these norms help to protect. Certain defenses and strategies of a covert kind are employed through which the offended but forbearance actor may come to terms with his "real" feelings and with the public threats to them.

The forbearant actor may accept the injury to his private or real valuations, repress the experience, or keep it as separate as possible from the rest of his conscious life. He may sincerely try to redefine his private conceptions in order to make his demands consistent with the treatment he and the interaction receive. He may, at least to himself, define forbearance as an opportunistic means to the end of manipulating the offender, thus proving at least to himself that his public accommodative behavior is not a real expression of his valuations. He may covertly impute disqualifying attributes to the offender

[3] Talcott Parsons makes the same point in *The Social System*, p. 303: "When we turn to the consideration of normal social interaction within such an institutionalized framework as a process of mutually influenced and contingent action we see that a process of social control is continually going on. Actors are continually doing and saying things which are more or less 'out of line,' such as by insinuation impugning someone's motives, or presuming too much. Careful observation will show that others in the situation often without being aware of it, tend to react to these minor deviances in such a way as to bring the deviant back 'into line,' by tactfully disagreeing with him, by a silence which underlines the fact that what he said was not acceptable, or very often by humor as a tension-release, as a result of which he comes to see himself more nearly as others see him. These minor control mechanisms are, it may be maintained, the way in which the institutionalized values are implemented in behavior. They are, on a certain level, the most fundamental mechanisms of all, and only when they break down does it become necessary for more elaborate and specialized mechanisms come into play."

so that the behavior of the offender and the treatment accorded the offense need not be taken seriously.[4] He may tell himself that he will withdraw from communication and from the social relationship that gives rise to it as soon as it is polite to do so—thus allowing himself to feel that his forbearance is a sign of forbearance and nothing more. He may, finally, decide to tolerate the offensive behavior with the object in mind of sharply correcting the offender at a later time—a time when the offender will be obliged to accept the criticism in good grace.

[4] An extreme example is found among primary-school children who behave themselves in the required manner, while crossing their fingers or muttering to themselves denials and ritual profanations of the person to whose standards they must show forbearance.

The defenses we have been considering represent a form of what has been called intrapersonal communication.[5] They may be effective even though they seldom give rise to overt action and interpersonal communication except, perhaps, during some subsequent interaction.

[5] Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, *Communication* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1951), pp. 199–203 and 278–279.

In conversational interaction, as opposed to many kinds of social order, offense is quite common; hence, forbearance is almost a constant requirement. The dissensus that forbearance conceals, as expressed in the many intrapersonal communications to which the necessity to exert forbearance gives rise, should be considered as part of the model for conversational interaction and not as something which occurs as a deviation from the model. For example, the exercise of gain strategies is so common a thing that it is f often better to conceive of interaction not as a scene of harmony but as an arrangement for pursuing a cold war. A working acceptance may thus be likened to a temporary truce, a *modus vivendi* for carrying on negotiations and vital business.

It is interesting to note that a desire to maintain a working acceptance is, paradoxically enough, one of the few general bases of real consensus between persons. Individuals regularly act on the assumption that others are the sort of person who would attempt to maintain a working acceptance, and this imputation of an attribute is usually justified by consequent behavior. Persons, on the whole, can be relied upon to make every effort to avoid a "scene." In this context it may be added that many so-called empty gestures seem to serve primarily as signs that the sender is "responsible" and can be counted upon to play the social game of maintaining a surface agreement with and an acceptance of the others.

The very general tendency for persons to maintain a working acceptance during immediate communication must not lead us to make narrow assumptions concerning the motivation of this behavior. An actor may attempt to maintain the appearance of agreement in order to save the situation and minimize embarrassment, or in order to be genuinely indulgent to the offender, or in order to exploit the offender in some way.

We must also be careful to keep in mind the truism that persons

who are present are treated very differently from persons who are absent. Persons who treat each other with consideration while in each other's immediate presence regularly show not the slightest consideration for each other in situations where acts of deprivation cannot be immediately and incontestably identified as to source by the person who is deprived by these acts. The kind of consideration shown for persons who are not present is a special problem and is not dealt with in this study.

The use of the social order model in studying conversational interaction is inadequate in certain other ways, to be considered later.

# Part Three

## *On Information About One's Self*

# *Chapter III: Linguistic Behavior*

doi

In common sense usage, the term "communication" seems to be used chiefly to refer to the transmission of information by means of configurations of language signs, either spoken or written. This kind of sign behavior has certain general characteristics:

1. The vocabulary of terms employed can be defined or specified with tolerable clarity and interpersonal agreement, and is relatively independent of the context or medium in which it occurs. Hence, messages framed in one language can be translated without great loss into other language systems.
2. Messages that are put together by means of language signs can be discursive, involving a long sequence of interdependent links of meaning. These messages can also be abstract in character.
3. The language or linguistic component of a message is not merely consensually understood but the meaning is, in some sense, officially accredited. The sender may be made explicitly responsible for having sent it and the recipient may be made officially responsible for receiving and understanding it. Given the social situation in which the message occurs, its linguistic meaning is the formally sanctioned one.
4. Linguistic behavior is thought (by the everyday user) to be merely and admittedly a means employed in order to convey information. There is an obligation to value and judge the message on no other basis. It is felt that a linguistic message is conveyed intentionally for the purpose of conveying the meaning of it. Speech or writing is a goal-directed act, and communication is the goal. It is a voluntary act, in the sense that the interpretation the recipient ought to make is foreseeable by the sender before he sends his message, at a time when it is possible for him to modify his message and within his capacity to do so.
5. A linguistic message—more technically, the semantic component of a message—has an explicitly stated object of reference or direction of intent. As a recent student of conversational interaction has suggested:

   "The direction of intent is operationally defined as the object toward which the remark is made. Remarks may be directed toward the self, toward the group relationships, toward the issue being

> discussed and toward aspects not involved in the immediate grouping."[1]
>
> The "meaning" of a message resides, then, in what is said about its object of reference. Meaning is thus officially independent of the actor who sends the message and of the conditions under which the message is sent.[2]

No doubt the most important kinds of linguistic behavior consist of spoken and written communication. There are, of course, clear cut examples of linguistic behavior which involve performances of other kinds. The Morse code and the semaphore system provide cases in point. These are, as Sapir suggested, language transfers, and anything that can officially be expressed by means of spoken words can be conveyed by them.

In addition, there are cases where formal and official language-like status is given to certain behaviors of a gestural kind but where a limitation exists as to the size of the vocabulary and as to the number of different statements that can be made in the language. In considering this kind of behavior, Sapir says:

> In the more special class of communicative symbolism one cannot make a word-to-word-translation, as it were, back to speech but can only paraphrase in speech the intent of the communication. Here belong such symbolic systems as wig-wagging, the use of railroad lights, bugle calls in the army, and smoke signals.[3]

Sapir also suggests that this kind of language behavior usually subserves a technical process where spoken and written language is impractical because of transmission conditions or because there is a desire to rigidly limit the possible response to the message. In Dixon, for example, a shepherd rounding up sheep can manage his dog by means of about six gestures that are significant to his dog and for which the dog, in a sense, is held officially responsible. There is a signal to make the dog stop in his tracks, to make him lie down, to make him come back to the shepherd, to make him cannily come up behind a sheep, to make him cut far in back of a stray so as to round it up. Perhaps there is also a type of signal employed to make the dog vary the rate at which these commands are obeyed, but this tends to be a less official part of the vocabulary and is played down in the competitions called dog trials that are formally designed to test the discipline and linguistic capacity of dogs. Another technical language can be found in use in Dixon on Friday nights by the eight or ten men regularly employed to unload the steamboat. Due to noise level and the restriction of angle of vision caused by equipment, a small vocabulary of terms consisting of full arm gestures is employed to instruct the hoist engineer as to rate of movement of the hoist rope, as to lateral and vertical movements, and as to stopping and starting.

[1] B. Steinzer, "The Development and Evaluation of a Measure of Social Interaction," *Human Relations*, II, 103–121 and 319–347. Steinzer attempts to work out a set of general intent categories for the content analysis of conversation.

[2] Recipients almost always qualify the information in a message by observations concerning the state of the sender, his calmness, nervousness, seriousness, social qualifications, and the like. Strictly speaking, these qualifying sources of information pertain to the response of the recipient, not to the content of the message. Qualifying information does not officially provide us with biographical material concerning the sender, as do his statements about himself. The signs which convey qualifying information are not linguistic signs and do not have an object of reference; they are natural signs or expressions and are an intrinsic part of the very thing about which they convey information.

[3] Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir*, ed. David G. Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 107.

We must consider, finally, an even more simple kind of language behavior. There are certain gestures which are employed as an official part of linguistic communication but which can only be officially used to convey a single piece of information.[4] In Dixon, for example, pupils in the classroom gain permission to speak to the teacher by first holding up their right hand. Pupils are taught that holding up one's hand is the formally correct and recognized way of obtaining the attention of the teacher. Similarly, when one student has the eraser that has been assigned to his block of seats, other pupils in this block can request the eraser by tapping the student who has it on the shoulder. Tapping for this purpose has been explicitly and officially assigned a meaning, although, of course, the teacher has difficulty in preventing students from loading the sign with meanings of an unformalized kind. Throughout our society, beckoning gestures signifying "come here," and shrugging of shoulders signifying "I do not know" tend also to be messages whose meaning is clearly understood and to a degree formally accredited.[5]

[4] Many examples of conventionalized gestures of this kind are considered in Levette J. Davidson, "Some Current Folk Gestures and Sign Languages," *American Speech*, XXV, 3–9.

The general characteristics of linguistic behavior have been mentioned, and four types of this kind of behavior have been described: language proper; language transfers; technical symbol systems; and official signals. These types of linguistic behavior vary in complexity and formality, but all share the essential characteristic of linguistic behavior: they carry a message for which the sender can be made responsible, and they are properly usable in an admittedly intentional way for purposes of communication.

[5] The art of miming provides a very exceptional case of employing sequences of understandable gestures in order to convey information of the same complexity as can be conveyed by the spoken word. Certain types of deaf and dumb language which do not employ language transfer provide another example. These symbol systems are not an adaptation to special technical conditions of communication, as in the case of train signals, but rather an adaptation to lack of usual communication capacities on the part of communicators.

When we examine linguistic behavior, a clear difference can be found between the object *at which* the message is *directed* and the object *to which* the message *refers*. When an individual says something about a person he is talking to, these two objects coincide, but this fact should not lead us to confuse the role of recipient with the object of reference.

In analyzing linguistic behavior, it is convenient to distinguish types of recipient. A linguistic message may be directed at one or more specific persons who are immediately present to the sender. This immediate linguistic communication is sometimes called face-to-face interaction or conversational interaction. It is, perhaps, the classic or type-case of linguistic communication, other kinds being modifications of it. Linguistic communication may, of course, occur between specific persons who are not immediately present to one another, as in the case of telephone conversations and exchanges of letters. These mediated kinds of communication contact vary, of course, in the degree to which they restrict or attenuate the flow of information and the rapidity of interchange. In the literature, this has been called point-to-point communication. Linguistic communi-

cation may also occur between a source of sign impulse and all the persons who happen to come within range of it. This has been called mass-impression in the literature. We are accustomed to consider this weakened kind of linguistic communication in reference to advertising and the mass media, radio, press, etc., but it also plays an important role in rural communities. In Dixon, for example, two of the three shops and the post office have bulletin boards on which notices of all kinds are posted. These notices are usually of the "open" or "to whom it may concern" kind. Anyone seeing a notice is automatically considered to be an appropriate recipient for it. Invitations to community socials, to auctions, to funerals, etc., are posted in this way.[6] Correspondingly, the kinds of "social occasions" that are organized by means of conversational or point-to-point communication of invitations are not stressed, although they are becoming more common. In previous periods in the social history of Dixon, invitations to weddings were also posted in an open way, a practice which is still observed in a few small Bergand communities. Mass impression is often a weakened form of linguistic communication because recipients are usually not obliged to accept responsibility for having received the message, although this is not always the case.[7] Orders posted on a barracks bulletin board usually render all persons in the barracks legally accountable for having read the message. Government proclamations in official newspapers or even on the radio can also carry this kind of responsibility. Posting of banns is another case in point.[8]

[6] In European cities that have a *quartier* type of social organization, the death of a resident is sometimes advertised by means of a card placed in a shop window or on the door of a house, the card inviting all those who wish to attend the funeral.

[7] Recently we have been witnessing a series of conflicts concerning the use of certain bounded spaces for this kind of communication. Legal questions have arise as to whether advertisers have the right to make use of the sky above a city for skywriting, the sidewalks in front of stores for loudspeaker blasts, and bus and rail coaches for piped advertising. This is referred to as the problem of the "captive audience."

[8] Ruesch and Bateson (*op. cit.*, p. 39) have suggested "many-to-one" as another type of linguistic communication. In such cases, a large number of different persons are able to convey, in a relatively anonymous way, particular messages to a single recipient. Instead of a mass-impression this is, in a sense, mass-impressing communication. Another marginal type of linguistic communication occurs when one sender directs a message to a specific recipient in such a way that many other persons can equally well receive the message. This occurs in the case of personal message boards, as found in some European cities, and when a child comes to the window of a house and yells for his companion to come out. Perhaps these kinds of communication arrangements can best be considered in another context, in an analysis of sender and recipient responsibility.

# *Chapter IV: Expressive Behavior*

doi

Whenever an individual acts in any way, we can assume that something about him is conveyed, even if it is only the fact that he did not act in a given way. In the style of the act, in the manner in which the act is performed, in the relation of the act to the context in which it occurs—in all these ways something about the actor is presented in the character of his act. The tendency for the character of the actor to overflow into the character of his acts is usually called the expressive aspect of behavior.[1]

Behavior which is not expressive may be called instrumental. Instrumental behavior consists of activity which is officially of no value in itself but only of value in so far as it serves as a means to another end. Linguistic communication is a type of instrumental behavior and is officially valued only because it can serve as a means of conveying information. It must be clearly understood that expressive behavior is not a form of instrumental behavior; it is not intended as an admitted means to the end of transmitting information, or, in fact, as a means to any other end. Expressive behavior is not, primarily, rational behavior that can find a place in a voluntaristic means-ends scheme; rather, it is part of the behavioral impulse associated with any act.[2]

In distinguishing between expressive and instrumental behavior, a manner of speaking has been employed which carries certain kinds of danger. Instead of speaking of instrumental and expressive behavior, it might be more accurate to speak of the instrumental and expressive components of a given concrete behavior. It might be still more accurate and stills after to speak rather of the instrumental and expressive functions of a given concrete behavior, this last usage minimizing the tendency to refit into concrete entities what are merely analytical aspects or abstractions of concrete entities. Purely for reasons of style, all three usages will be employed interchangeably.

When we examine the components of behavior in situations, it will be apparent that in one situation the instrumental component will be dominant and in another situation the expressive component will

[1] Perhaps the best study of expressive behavior is to be found in Gordon Allport and Philip Vernon, *Studies in Expressive Behavior* (New York: Macmillan, 1933).

[2] An effort is sometimes made in the literature to say that a logic can be found in expressive behavior; it may be "understandable" to others, through a process of emotional empathy; it may "hang together" "as a whole where the form of each of the parts reinforces and repeats the form of the whole; it may serve a psychological or social function; etc. However, the possibility of making many different kinds of"sense" out of expressive behavior does not alter the status of that behavior as a non-rational, non-instrumental type of action.

be dominant. One usually says, for example, that the performance of a manual task is predominantly instrumental and that our exclamation when we stub our toe is predominantly expressive. It will also be apparent that a situation which we expect to find defined as predominantly instrumental may take on extra expressive significance until the latter component becomes the dominant one. Thus, when a worker on the line becomes concerned with the kind of time-rating that has been accorded to his job by management, both he and management may become more concerned with the spirit in which he performs his job and with his marginal productivity than with his production as a whole. The expressions he conveys may suddenly become more important than the operations he performs. In all of this there is no conceptual problem.

The distinction between expressive and instrumental components of action has been recognized by many students. An aspect of the distinction appears in an essay by Durkheim written in 1906.[3] At that time he suggested that some acts have concrete consequences and that other acts have social consequences. In the first case we deal with acts only because they have consequences; in the second case we deal with acts because they express something about the actor and his relation to the moral world. Radcliffe-Brown and Talcott Parsons make a similar distinction.[4] Lately, Bales has given us a thorough characterization of the different between the two components of action:

> When we wish to make a distinction regarding a predominant weight of emphasis on the backward or forward reference of action, we shall use the terms "expressive" and "instrumental" respectively, to designate the proper weight of emphasis. If the act is judged by the observer to be steered by cognitive orientation primarily to the past, or if it is felt to be caused in a nonmeaningful manner by some existing state of emotion or motivational tension in the self, and if the results which follow it are judged not to have been specifically anticipated by symbolic manipulation, we shall speak of the act as primarily expressive. On the other hand, if the act is judged to be steered by a cognitive orientation to the future as well as the past and to be caused in part by the anticipation of future consequences, we shall speak of the act as instrumental. This distinction is recognized in our everyday habits of speech: in what we have called primarily expressive activity, the individual is said to act "because" of some immediate pressure, tension, or emotion. In the instrumental act, the individual is said to act "in order to" realize certain ends. Thus, we might drum our fingers on the table *because* we are nervous or tense, or we might raise our eyebrows *in order to* summon the waiter. The difference lies in the degree to which anticipated consequences enter in as a steering factor. All instrumental activity is also expressive, as we view it, but not all expressive activity is necessarily instrumental. All behavior is considered to be at least

[3] Emile Durkheim, "Determination du Fait Moral," reprinted in *Sociologie et Philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), especially pp. 60–61.

[4] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Taboo" (Frazier Lecture, Cambridge, 1939), *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London: Cohen and West, 1952), pp. 143–144; Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1937), pp. 430–433.

> expressive, as viewed by the other and as apprehended and scored by the observer.[5]

[5] Robert F. Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Press, 1950), pp. 50–51.

The distinction between expressive behavior and instrumental behavior has been elaborated and at the same time confused by many current writers who contrast expressive behavior with linguistic behavior. In making use of these efforts, one always runs the risk of forgetting that linguistic behavior is merely one sub-type of instrumental behavior, and that the proper contrast is between the two general classes of behavior, expressive and instrumental, and not between one class and a member of the other class. We can partly correct for this error by keeping in mind that our interest here is the contrast of one kind of instrumental behavior, namely, linguistic behavior, with one kind of expressive behavior, namely, the kind that is apt to occur when persons are engaged in conversational interaction.

Sapir provides us with a good statement of the intermingling of expressive and linguistically-instrumental behavior in speech:

> Gesture includes much more than the manipulation of the hands and other visible and movable parts of the organism. Intonations of the voice may register attitudes and feelings quite as significantly as the clenched fist, the wave of the hand, the shrugging of the shoulders, or the lifting of the eyebrows. The field of gesture interplays constantly with that of language proper, but there are many facts of a psychological and historical order which show that there are subtle yet firm lines of demarcation between them. Thus, to give but one example, the consistent message delivered by language symbolism in the narrow sense, whether by speech or by writing, may flatly contradict the message communicated by the synchronous system of gestures, consisting of movements of the hands and head, intonations of the voice, and breathing symbolisms. The former system may be entirely conscious, the latter entirely unconscious. Linguistic, as opposed to gesture, communication tends to the official and socially accredited one; hence one may intuitively interpret the relatively unconscious symbolisms of gesture as psychologically more significant in a given context than the words actually used. In such cases as these we have a conflict between explicit and implicit communications in the growth of the individual's social experience.[6]

[6] Sapir, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

Another good description is found in Pear, in his discussion of conversational tact:

> Let us for a moment regard conversational tact objectively, as a mere matter of movement-patterns. Gramophone records of some tactful conversations would give a very imperfect impression, for many signals of tact are visual. Raising or refraining from raising the eyebrows, presenting a sympathetic or inscrutable face, settling into one's chair as if to invite the vis-à-vis to make a long speech; rising suddenly as if to indicate its termination; no one of these events is transmissible by radio without television. Subtler, however, and often less easy to study

> are speech-sounds made tactfully. The words and phrases, intonation, speech-melody, are all important; yet their choice depends so much upon local convention, the relative social status of the conversants, the district in which the phrase is used, that to interpret them requires expert knowledge. At times, an important feature of conversational exchange may be a momentary physical contact of the conversers. A touch, a hand on the shoulder, a hand-shake or its omission, when meeting or parting—all these gestures, especially the hand-shake, need to be translated and the translation should be an up-to-date one.[7]

[7] T. H. Pear, *Psychology of Conversation* (London: Nelson, 1929), p. 48.

The distinction between the linguistic and expressive components of speech is often pointed up by reference to the logically discursive character of language proper in contrast to the "emotional" character of the expressive or gestural components of speech. As Park suggested:

> In the fist case [symbolic language] the function of language is purely 'referential,' as in scientific discourse. It points out its object, identifiers, classifies, and describes it. In the second case [expressive language], language, modulated by accent, intonation and inflection, tends to be expressive merely. In that case the function of words seems to be to reveal the mood and the sentiments of the person who utters them, rather than to define and express an idea.[8]

[8] Robert Ezra Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 38–39.

Ogden and Richards, of course, have given us the terms "referential" and "emotive" to designate the linguistic and expressive components of speech.[9] Lasswell has suggested the terms "purport" and "style" to designate the same difference in written communication.[10]

[9] C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938), pp. 152–158.

[10] Harold Lasswell, *Language and Politics* (New York: Stewart, 1949), chap. ii, "Language of Politics."

Common sense understanding of the phrase "expressive behavior" seems to be closely tied to commonsense notions concerning the identity and character of the so-called "natural expression" of the emotions. If one is to use the term "expressive behavior" or "expression" in a consistent and technical way, it is helpful to go back to the commonsense conception of emotional expression and to make explicit some of the assumptions and limitations of this everyday concept.

Critchley, in his discussion of expressive behavior, provides us with a useful summary of emotional signs. He includes among them:

> . . . those cutaneous phenomena of a primitive and protective nature, subserved by the autonomic nervous system and which are almost entirely outside the control of volition; the manifestation of blushing, pallor, horripilation, goose-flesh and sweating belong here. Tremor of the hands, dryness of the mouth, increase or decrease in the muscular tonus, alteration in stance and attitude, are also regarded as expressive movements of a more automatic and less voluntary character.[11]

[11] Macdonald Critchley, *The Language of Gesture* (London: Edward Arnold, 1939), pp. 11–12.

Another is by Blumer:

> Expressive behavior is presented through such features as quality of the voice—tone, pitch, volume—in facial set and movement, in the look of the eyes, in the rhythm, vigor, agitation of muscular movements, and in posture. These form the channels for the disclosure of feeling. It is through these that the individual, as we say, reveals himself as apart from what he says or does. Expressive behavior is primarily a form of release, implying a background of tension. It tends to be spontaneous and unwitting; as such, it usually appears as an accompaniment of intentional and consciously directed conduct.[12]

The commonsense understanding is that these emotional expressions are instinctive and not subject to voluntary control;[13] that the form of the expression is somehow an iconic image of the mental state or emotion that gives rise to the expression; that signs of emotion provide a trustworthy index of how and what the action is really feeling. Let us examine these assumptions.

When we examine instances of emotional expression, we frequently find that these signs are not iconic and do not portray or delineate by their structure the structure of their reference. Since these signs are symptoms, not symbols, they frequently form a highly differentiated part of the causal complex that gave rise to them.[14] One also finds that it is not helpful to refer to these expressions as "instinctive." By now it is well understood that the same group of persons uses the same expression, e.g., tears, in quite different emotional contexts, and that there are very great differences from group to group as to where, how, and how much the emotions will be expressed.[15] In referring to expressive behavior as forming a collective texture, Blumer suggests that:

> . . . expressive behavior is regularized by social codes much as is language or conduct. There seems to be as much justification and validity to speak of an affective structure or pattern of meanings. Almost every stabilized social situation in the life of a group imposes some scheme of affective conduct on individuals, whose conformity to it is expected. At a funeral, in a church, in the convivial group, in the polite assemblage, in the doctor's office, in the theater, at the dinner table, to mention a few instances, narrow limits are set for the play of expressive conduct and affective norms are imposed. In large measure, living with others places a premium on skill in observing the affective demands of social relations; similarly, the socialization of the child and his incorporation into the group involves an education into the niceties of expressive conduct. These affective rules, demands, and expectations form a code, etiquette, or ritual which, as suggested above, is just as much a complex, interdependent structure as is the language of the group or its tradition.[16]

And even if one wished to argue that the emotions themselves are somewhat instinctive, as opposed to the form in which they are conventionally expressed, it would still be necessary to appreciate that

[12] Herbert Blumer, "Social Attitudes and Nonsymbolic Interaction," *J. of Educational Sociology*, IX (515–523), 520.

[13] Psychologists have provided some rational elaborations of the voluntary-involuntary dichotomy. Voluntary behavior is said to consist of movement subject to the conscious control of the subject. These movements are said to be activated by the striped muscles under control of the cerebospinal nervous system. Involuntary behavior is said to consist of movements not subject to the conscious volition or control of the subject. These movements are thought to be activated by the smooth muscles under control of the autonomic nervous system. A qualification recognized by psychologists is that many movements over which persons have no conscious control can be brought under voluntary control by special training; the eye-blink is a favorite example. This view of the dichotomy is inadequate in many different ways, but I am not able to provide an adequate analysis of the concepts involved. For an interesting preliminary treatment see Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949), pp. 69–74.

[14] Apparently there is some ground for claiming that emotional expressions are vestigial remains of acts and states once useful to the organism as an adaptation to crises. See Charles Darwin, *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872).

[15] These differences have been well described in Weston Labarre, "The Cultural Basis of Emotions and Gestures," *J. of Personality*, XVI, 49–68. A model empirical study is found in David Efron, *Gesture and Environment* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1941), where a description is given of differences in conversational gestures between Italians and Jews in New York.

[16] Herbert Blumer, *op. cit.*, pp. 522–523.

an event which arouses our emotions must derive its significance from the world of learned social values in which we live.

Further, it is a fact that there is an important expressive component in behavior which is thought to be in no way emotional, in the ordinary sense of that term. For example, in making a statement that is felt to be the kind which requires a great deal of careful consideration, deliberation, and freedom from emotional bias, the conviction that one is, in fact, making a thoroughly voluntary statement of this kind, is conveyed by certain expressive behaviors of an involuntary kind. If listeners feel that this expressive component is deliberately feigned and controlled, then the capacity of the statement to convince the listeners that it is a sincerely deliberative one may be destroyed. Similarly, all our so-called voluntary behavior, such as walking, or talking, involves a degree of unselfconsciousness and could not be smoothly executed were one to become too conscious of what one is doing.

The commonsense assumption that emotional expression is a reliable index to the state of mind of the actor appears to be partly valid, but perhaps not for the reasons commonsense would supply. In this study it is assumed that the emotional expression practiced by the members of a particular group is determined by the moral rules recognized in the group regarding social interaction. The member must not only learn how and when to express his emotions, but is morally obliged to express them in this approved way.[17] Further, the member is obliged to obey the rules of the expression, once learned, in a sufficiently automatic and unselfconscious way so that observers will in fact be partly justified in their assumption that the emotion conveyed to them is a dependable index of the actors emotional state. It is suggested here that emotional expression is a reliable index because persons have been taught to act in which a way as to make it a reliable index and are more ally obliged to act in such a way as to confirm the fiction that emotional response is an unguarded instinctive response to the situation.

[17] An excellent treatment of this question may be found in Charles Blondel, *Introduction a la Psychologie collective* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1927), chap. iii, "La Vie affective," pp. 152–158.

We see, then, that if we focus our attention on emotional behavior, we shall arrive at too narrow a conception of the concept of "expression." Some further, and even more fundamental, limitations are produced by undue concern with emotional expression. We maybe begin to examine these limitations by noting Morris' definition of expressive behavior.

> . . . the manner of production of signs and the kinds of signs produced may themselves be to the producer of the sign or to other persons signals of the state of the producer of the sign. This is a common situation, and such signs can be called expressive signs. A sign on

> this usage is *expressive* if the fact of its production is itself a sign to its interpreter of something about the producer of the sign.[18]

[18] Charles Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946), pp. 67–68.

Here Morris seems to be suggesting that the expressive aspects of sign behavior, such as rapidity or smoothness of conversational flow, may express something about the emotional state of the talker in exactly the same way as might other holiday movements, such as nervous movements with fingers and eyes. None of these signs are symbols instrumentally designed as a means to the end of communication; they are natural signs or symptoms of a causal complex, the individual's emotional state. However it seems to be reasonable to extend the concept of expression and say that certain aspects of a given body of speech may be in one sense of the symbolical order and yet expressive. For example, considerable work has been done by psychologists,[19] linguistic anthropologists,[20] and psychoanalysts,[21] in illustrating the notion that a patter of thought or a way of organizing phantasies can act as a causal complex and give rise to expressions of a symptomatic natural-sign type, even though the events that are patterned or organized consist of conventional linguistic symbols which carry an object of reference.

Once we allow that a causal complex which produces expressions can be something other than the emotional state of a particular actor, and even something of a different order, namely, images and symbols, we are in a position to take a further step. It greatly simplifies thinking if we assume that a set of persons in actual interaction with one another constitutes a casual complex which can give rise to expressions.[22] When we classify interaction systems along with emotional states as something which can give rise to natural signs, then we are in a position to appreciate more clearly the great number of events which are "expressive" and to remove from our focus of attention from gestures which pertain to the physiological equipment of particular actors and bring it to bear on events which express relationships between persons or between persons and the social context.

Regardless of what casual complex one is interested in—be it the emotional state of the actor, his mode of organizing experience, or the interaction as a unit—the meaning of an expression does not lie in the relation between the expressive act and the actor but in the relation of the actor, through time and space, to the social context in which the expressive act occurs. Bales provides a good statement of this:

> A great many of the qualitative distinctions we feel in the observation of interaction, and the verbal terms by which we designate these distinctions, rest essentially on our conception of the nature of the established social relationship between the participants. For example, approximately the same kind of concrete behavior might be called "re-

[19] See, for example, F. H. Sanford, "Speech and Personality: A Comparative Case Study," *Character and Personality*, X, 169–198; Stanley S. Newman, "Personal Symbolism in Language Patterns," *Psychiatry*, II, 177–184, and "Behavior Patterns in Linguistic Structures," in *Language, Culture and Personality*, eds. Leslie Spier, A. Irving-Hallowell and Stanley S. Newman (Manasha, Wis.: Sapir Memorial Publication Fund, 1941), pp. 94–106.

[20] See, for example, Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Four Articles on Metalinguistics," reprinted from *Technology Review* and *Language, Culture, and Personality* (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, 1950).

[21] A clear treatment of the different order of things that can give rise to expressions is given by Roland Dalbiez, *Psychoanalytical Method and the Doctrine of Freud*, trans. T. F. Lindsay (New York: Longmans, Green, 1941), Vol. II, chap. iii, "The Methods of Exploring the Unconscious." See especially p. 94 ff., where he considers the fact that psychic states, like physiological ones, can give rise to symptoms of a psychic kind. He employs the term "psychic Expression" to refer to a natural sign of mental phenomenon.

[22] I am not concerned here with arguing the nominalist-realist problem; interaction as a system of integrated acts may ultimately be best analyzed from the point of view of each participant, taken successively, and not from the interactive system as a whole. Whether fiction or not, the treatment of an interaction system as a reality *sui generis* greatly simplifies the conceptual problem.

warding the other" if the status of the actor is assumed to be higher, or "congratulating the other" if the status is assumed to be equal, or "admiring the other" if the status of the actor is assumed to be lower. Other-distinctions are based on a combination of this kind of assumption plus an assumption about the nature of the preceding act, that is, on temporal sequence. For example, a given kind of concrete behavior might be called "submission" if it follows an aggressive attack by the other, or "agreement" if it follows a tentative proposal.[23]

[23] Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis*, pp. 68–69.

Once we see that the commonsense assumptions concerning emotional expression involve limitations, we can go on and attempt to introduce a set of assumptions that are more helpful for sociological purposes. We can see expressive behavior as one sub-class of a more general category, expressive events. We can define expressive events as signs that are symptomatic of the structure of a social situation, this structure involving the relation of the participations to one another and to the situation. The emotion (as this term is commonly understood) that is involved in these relations will only be one variable, and for the source of these expressive events we will look not to the physiological machinery of a particular actor but to the general characteristics of the physical and social scene in which the interaction occurs.

The scene in which interaction occurs seems constantly to provide us with a sort of expressive field, a supply of events so well designed to portray the conceptions and evaluations that persons have of one another that after a process of social learning we unselfconsciously and uncalculatingly employ them in this way. Let us attempt to outline these general sources of expressive signs.

Persons, like other physical objects, are uniquely located in time and space. Therefore they are necessarily ordered in the transitive relation of priority (both temporal and spatial) with respect to any particular point of reference. This provides—whether desired or not—a readily available means of expressing social precedence. Similarly, degrees of physical closeness or separateness between persons are inevitable on physical grounds and incidentally provide vehicles for expressing social intimacy and social difference.[24] This provides us with a sort of "expressive ecology."

[24] The role of "presence of one's body" as a vehicle for carrying signs expressive of social intimacy and equality has been given important consideration by W. Lloyd Warner in the Yankee City series, especially in the treatment of the social role of clique structures. The phrase "informal participation" has been used in this connection. Perhaps the limiting case of this sort of thing is found in the use of the term "to have smallpox" that is found among American criminals. A person wanted for arrest is said to have "smallpox;" "smallpox" is "catching" because anyone found in the intimate presence of a person wanted for arrest is himself subject to arrest.

The process of linguistic communication, as a physical process, has many preconditions, characteristics, and concomitants which can, and regularly do, serve as expressions of the attitudes and evaluations that participants have regarding one another. Delicate shadings of approval and disapproval, inclusion and exclusion, are typically conveyed in this way.[25]

The formal organization of persons for the pursuance of a given overall task requires—due to the nature of organization as such—that

orders be given, that actions be initiated by one person to another, and that individuals actively cooperate with one another.[26] Many of these requirements of organization provide vehicles which are employed as signs expressive of the valuation that the members of the organization make of one another. These valuations pertain to matters such as equality-inequality, subordination-superordination, dependency, etc.

The performance of a particular individual at a given task differs at least to some degree—on physical grounds alone—from the performance those present have come to expect of the task in general and of the individual in particular. Inescapable deviations of this kind provide a ready sign for conveying the attitude of the performer to those for whom and among whom the performance occurs.[27]

Finally, acts which are traditionally taken, in a particular situation, as expressive of the conceptions that persons have of one another can themselves take on an extra superimposed layer of expressive significance. Thus, for example, ceremonies such as greetings and farewells, which usually express our approval of one another, may be performed in a snide or fawning fashion, expression different additional evaluations.

From all the events which might be employed as expressions, it is apparent that one cultural group will stress the use of one type of event and make little use of another type, while a different cultural group will distribute its stresses and omissions in a different way.[28]

It is also apparent that social change can bring to a group an alteration in the signs that are stressed by it. Further, it is to be noted that as a consequence of social change, there may be a radical change in the expression carried by a particular sign vehicle. This possibility can be illustrated from the social history of Dixon.

In Dixon, patterns of social visiting and mutual aid regarding crucial croft tasks have traditionally followed kinship and neighborhood ties, so that informal participation, while an expression of lines of solidarity, does not convey any information that has not long been taken for granted. Failure to channel one's social participation along these lines expressed the fact that persons once close to each other had had a personal quarrel, a "falling out." However, with the growing importance of internal cleavages along social class lines, informal participation is coming to take on a new meaning. Information participation is coming to express class equality. Since class position is subject to kinds of change and ratification that are not characteristic of position in a kinship system or neighborhood circle, informal parties in Dixon are coming to take on the ethos that is characteristic of these gatherings in middle class Western society. Where before these gatherings were taken in a calm way, as a matter of course, they are

[25] An example can be found in William F. White and Burleigh B. Gardner, "Facing the Foreman's Problems," *Human Organization*, IV, 1–18. In this article the writers describe the care that management must take not to talk with one worker more than with another, lest this be taken as an expression of favoritism (see p. 10, the section on "Communication and Favoritism"). They also consider the fact that "one-way" communication may express one kind of social evaluation or relationships, and "two-way" communication another relationships.

[26] A group of sociologists influenced by the work of E. D. Chapple have stressed, perhaps too much so, the expressive overtones usually found in situations where one worker must habitually initiate action of a purely instrumental kind to another worker.

[27] An important body of data illustrating this possibility is found in the literature on restriction of output, as, for example, Donald Roy, "Quota Restriction and Goldbricking in a Machine Shope," *Amer. J. Sociol.*, LVII< 427–442. Another body of data is found in the psychological analysis of "feeding tantrums" on the part of children, where refusal to east serves as a way-in which attitude to one's parents is expressed; see, for example, Emmy Sylvester, "Analysis of Psychogenic Anorexia and Vomiting in a Four-Year-Old Child," The *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, I, 167–187. Accidents at work are perhaps an extreme example; see Karl Menninger, "Purposive Accidents as an Expression of Self-Destructive Tendencies," *Int. J. Psycho-analysis*, XVII, 6–16. The tendency for a given task performance to take on a "project value" having to do with early experiences of the actor is illustrated in D. D. Bond, *The Love and Fear of Flying* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).

[28] See, for example, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character* (New York: New York Academy of Science, 1942), pp. 74–83, where the apparent tendency of the Balinese to place special emphasis on the cardinal points and on differences in elevation as sources of sign-vehicles is considered.

now taking on a tone of excitement at the upper levels of the class system and a tone of disappointment at the lower class levels.

Another illustration of the shift in significance of social participation is found in the case of the twice-monthly whist-socials held during the winter months. Until about 1950, invitations to these socials were "open;" anyone wanting to come to the first half, which consisted of progressive whist, was welcome; anyone wanting to come to the second half, which consisted of a dance, was also welcome, whether or not he had come for the first part. During intermissions at whist, tea and sandwiches would be served as a collective social operation; the eight or nine persons acting as organizational hosts would bring food from the kitchen and serve everyone in the hall in rotation from platters of sandwiches and single pots of tea. Seating during the tea was of no great importance and expressed kinship ties, neighborhood ties, and age-grade intimacy. Since the tables were arranged in a continuous chain around the hall, choice extorted to the right of one was sometimes not accompanied by choice exerted to the left of one. In any case, each participant had enough ties with any other participant to sustain informal interaction for the period of the intermission. During 1950 a new institution was introduced from the other and more "advanced" islands. It was called a "hostess social" and entailed a radical alteration in the traditional invitation and catering pattern. The dance during the second half of the social remained open to everyone, but participation in the first part, the whist, was by personal invitation only. Invitations were extended by about fifteen women selected by the organizing committee as "hostesses." Each hostess invited enough guests for two or more "tables" of whist, i.e.e, two or more sets of four persons. As usual, the tables were arranged in a continuous chain around the hall, but at meal time the chain was broken and each hostess was given her own area in the hall and her own tables. Hot water was collectively organized, but the rest of the food was handled separately for each cluster of tables, the hostess being responsible for bringing food for her own set of tables. This pattern for organizing food distribution brought hostesses into competition and comparison with one another regarding number of tables invited, elaborateness of spread, etc. It also provided the community with a new way of seeing at a glance the cleavages in the community. By and large, a hostess still fills her quota with members of her family or neighborhood circle, and by and large anyone who wants to obtain an invitation can readily get one, but a tendency is apparent to select guests on a basis of class equality ties. New participation patterns such as these are, of course, both cause and effect of the emergence of class cleavages within the crofter population.

We are now in a position to summarize the characteristics of expressive behavior. In doing this a contrast will be made with the characteristics, as previously reported, of linguistic behavior.

1. Expressive behavior provides information that cannot be precisely formulated or defined, and, in an important sense, the persons of whom the behavior is expressive cannot be made officially and formally responsible for the information they have made available about themselves. (Linguistic behavior, on the other hand, can be precisely defined, and the person who communicates it can be made responsible for his communication.)
2. Information conveyed by expressive signs is not discursive and does not form part of an extended logically integrated line of reasoning. Typically, only certain general facts can be conveyed by expressive behavior, these having to do with the actor's general alignment or attitude toward whatever instrumental activity he happens to be engaged in at the time or toward the social situation which he happens to be participating in at the time. (Linguistic behavior, on the other hand, can form an extended line of argument, and the object of reference which it has may, but need not, concern the actor's general alignment to the situation.)
3. Expressive behavior is "uncalculated," or, to use a dubious term, "involuntary;" the expressive aspect of behavior is felt to be the sort of thing that one ought not to modify out of a desire to influence the response to oneself that the recipient will make because of the information carried by it. (Linguistic behavior is one type of instrumental behavior, and it is felt proper to have employed it with the consequences in mind that it is likely to call forth.)
4. Expressive behavior is an intrinsic part of the object which it carries information. The object may be a characteristic of a person or a characteristic of a set of persons in interaction with one another. Expressions are not conventional signs, i.e., symbols; they are natural signs or symptoms. Logically speaking, the structure of expressive sign relationships is relatively simple, involving only two elements, a causal complex and a symptom of this complex. An expressive sign remains a sign even though there may not be an interpreter present who makes use of it as a source of information. If an expressive sign is made use of, however, then it is essential that the interpreter be able to identify the causal complex which is responsible for the presence of the sign. (Linguistic behavior, on the other hand, is not an intrinsic part of the object to which it refers, but a conventional symbol of it. Linguistic sign relationships are logically complex, involving a minus of three elements: sign, object of reference, and interpreter. The causal complex re-

sponsible for the sign, namely the sender, is not an essential part of the relationship, although a frequent one. If a linguistic sign is not interpreted, it ceases to be a sign.)

# *Chapter V: The Management of Information About Oneself*

> There are some additional qualifications necessary, in the practical part of business, which may deserve some consideration in your leisure moments—such as, an absolute command of your temper, so as not to be provoked to passion upon any account; patience, to hear frivolous, impertinent, and unreasonable applications; with address enough to refuse, without offending; or, by your manner of granting, to double the oglibation;—dexterity enough to conceal a truth, without telling a lie; sagacity enough to read other people's countenances; and serenity enough not to let them discover anything by yours—a seeming frankness, with a real reserve. These are the rudiments of a politician; the world must be your grammar.[1]

[1] *Letters of Lord Chesterfield to His Son*, Everyman's ed. (New York: Dutton, 1929), p. 41.

doi

In social life, an actor commonly finds that very basic ends, of both an ultimate and intermediate kind, are furthered by gathering information about those with whom he interacts, especially information about the conceptions that these persons have of themselves and of him. With information about others, the actor can predict in general their likely behavior, and prepare for it. With information or this kind, he can determine how best to shape his own behavior in order to call forth a desired action from others. (The exploitation of the indicated likely response of others to his own behavior is required, of course, whether the actor wishes to please or to displease the others.) With information of this kind, the actor can learn what is expected of him and "where he stands" with respect to the others, helping thus to determine for himself who and what he is. We find, then, a whole complex of ends, any one or more of which may motivate the actor to the same kind of activity, i.e., an effort to find out as much as possible about the persons with whom he interacts.

The expressive function of behavior has to do with the tendency of events associated with the actor to carry information about the actor. This process has, intrinsically, nothing whatsoever to do with communication of a linguistic and intentioned kind. Expressive information is there whether or not anyone realizes this to be the case.

Specialists in "human relations" recognize that they must exploit all sources of information, linguistic and expressive, that are available to them, since it is appreciated that the subject's linguistic version of the situation may be a highly biassed [*sic*] one. Thus, we are given advice of the following kind:

> When you talk with the patient, you should listen, first, for what he wants to tell you, secondly, for what does not want to tell, thirdly, for what he cannot tell.[2]

[2] L. J. Henderson, "Physician and Patient as a Social System," *New England J. of Med.*, CCXII (819–823), 822.

It is interesting to note that certain patients also make use of expressive cues as a source of information. Fromm-Reichmann, for instance, makes the following suggestion concerning schizophrenic patients:

> The schizophrenic's ability to eavesdrop, as it were, on the doctor creates another special personal problem for some psychiatrists. The schizophrenic, since his childhood days, has been suspiciously aware of the fact that words are used not only to convey but also to veil actual communications. Consequently, he has learned to gather information about people in general, therefore also about the psychiatrist, from his inadvertant [*sic*] communications through changes in gesture, attitude and posture, inflections of voice or expressive movements.[3]

[3] Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Notes on the Development of Treatment of Schizophrenics by Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy," *Psychiatry*, XI (263-273), 273.

But, of course, this kind of detective work goes on constantly in non-professional situations; in every interaction, each participant is both patient and doctor. In Ichheiser's terminology, sources of *expression* of one person comes to be sources of *impression* of him for other persons.[4] Of all the actual sources of expression that exist concerning any actor, those which occur while the actor is engaged in linguistic communication are perhaps the most important. These sources are important because if a recipient is in a position to receive a linguistic communication in a face-to-face context, he is also thereby in an excellent position to observe the sender closely. It should be noted that a linguistic message involves a certain amount of active communication, transmission, or "sending" on the part or the sender and a certain amount of passive receptivity on the part of the recipient. In the case of expressive information, on the other hand, the impression or message is not so much sent as it is taken, the message is not so much communicated as it is conveyed; here the recipient must in many respects play a more active role than the sender.

[4] Gustav Ichheiser provides a clear statement of the difference between expression and impression on pp. 6–7 of his monograph, "Misunderstandings in Human Relations," Supplement to *The American Journal of Sociology*, Sept. 1949 (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1949).

It has been suggested that a whole complex of ends is served for the actor when he obtains information about the other. Consequently, recipients of a linguistic message tend to scrutinize the expressive behavior of the sender of the message. In many cases, of course, the sender has as good a motive for trying to prevent the flow of information about himself as his observers have for seeking this information. The only end that cannot be served for the sender by

the exercise of information control is that of free and spontaneous self-expression, and this is not so much an end of action as it is a characteristic of the behavioral impulse. The sender typically exerts tactical control, therefore, over his linguistic communication. He also tends to exert control over the expressive component of his behavior in an attempt to influence the response that recipients are like to have to it.

In general, a person who wishes to exert control over the information about self which others are able to acquire about him may communicate misinformation, inadequate information, or unserious information.[5]

Misinformation may be communicated by linguistic signs. This may be called deceit. In immediate communication, deceit does not occur frequently except under special circumstances, as in the "white lie." Persons who practise more serious deceit, e.g., the "bare-faced lie," and who are detected, place themselves in an almost indefensible position. Misinformation may be conveyed by expressive signs. This may be called feigning. Feigning occurs quite regularly, partly because the signs employed may refer to mental or emotional states which no one can completely prove that the sender does or does not possess.[6]

Inadequate information may be communicated by linguistic signs. A person who acts in this way is said to lack candor and frankness, to be close-lipped. When this reticence pertains to specific issues, as it may, for example, in the criminal world, we speak of clamming up. When a person provides inadequate expressive information, we sometimes think of him as being "cold" or disdainful. Some games of chance are specifically designed to give play to the faculty for expressive constraint, and the term poker-face, starting as a word applying to a game, has become widely used in ordinary social contexts.[7]

The transmission of misinformation and inadequate information appears to be a very general practice, although we have little systematic knowledge as to where in a given social structure it is practised the most and with what degree of success in carrying conviction.[8] Recently Margaret Mead has given us an extreme example:

> With this requirement, that all behavior be controlled and directed toward Party goals, goes the requirement that the Party member treat himself as a tool to carry out the wishes of the Party, but that he be at all times a conscious tool, voluntarily submitting himself to the discipline of the Party. And the discipline must be minute and detailed, over himself and over his every movement. So an informant reports an encounter with a Soviet professor in Berlin, who told her that he smoked a pipe "because while smoking a pipe the fact does not reveal so much." Then he added: "See, this we learned during the Soviet period. Before the revolution we used to say: 'The eyes are the mirror

[5] Professional rules in service trades sometimes explicitly deal with the degree to which different kinds of mis-communications are officially permissible. See, for example, E. C. Hughes, "Study of a Secular Institution: the Chicago Real Estate Board," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department or Sociology, University of Chicago, 1928), p. 85: "The line between misrepresentation and truth is hard to draw. The code deals with three types of questions regarding truth, (1) over-statement, (2) understatement of unfavorable facts, and (3) silence regarding significant facts which have not been asked for."

[6] In the case of feigning or dissimulation, the sender appreciates that his expressions are "false" and misinformative; they are employed, in fact, precisely in order to throw the observer "off the scent." A more important communication behavior is that of affectation, where a sender's expressive gestures are seen to be a product or calculation and design, while at the same time the impression is given that the sender is at least partly taken in by his own act and partly convinced that he is in fact the sort or person that his affectations attempt to establish. Affectation or posing is a crucial communication possibility and will be considered in chap. xix.

[7] It is an interesting fact that in some cultures the practice or making no expressive response in some situations is institutionalized in the form of a slight smile, this sign becoming a way of openly communicating that one is not expressively communicating.

[8] For a consideration of a social situation in which there arises the use of statements that are technically true but by implication false or insufficient, see Fritz J. Roethlisberger, "The Foreman: Master and Victim of Doubletalk," *Human Factors in Management*, ed. S. D. Hoslett (New York: Harper, 1946), pp. 51–73, especially pp. 58–59.

> of the soul.' The eyes can lie—and how. You can express with your eyes a devoted attention which in reality you are not feeling. You can express serenity or surprise. I often watch my face in the mirror before going to meetings and demonstrations and . . . I was suddenly aware that even with a memory of a disappointment my lips became closed. That is why by smoking a heavy pipe you are sure of yourself. Through the heaviness of the pipe the lips become deformed and cannot react spontaneously."[9]

[9] Margaret Mead, Soviet Attitudes toward Authority (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), pp. 65–66.

In Dixon, the practice of conveying misinformation or inadequate information seems well developed. Frustrations that occur in the pursuit of everyday tasks are rarely a cause of outbursts of anger and are usually taken with apparent calmness and coolness, as a matter of course. When a housewife accidentally burns her finger on a hot pot or puts too much salt in a soup, when two men have to try time and time again to move a cow from one field to another, when a fish net gets torn on the rocks of the floor of the inlet and must be drawn up for a day's work of mending—in these and many other daily frustrations very little emotional expression is allowed to escape. Occurrences which call forth frustration and deprivation are said, merely, to be "awkward."[10] So, too, when a young man leaves Dixon for a year or two to work as a seaman, or when he returns after having been away for this reason, his womenfolk will bid farewell to him at the pier, or greet him there, without kissing him and with very little show of emotion, yet family ties seem to run extremely deep. And, finally, persons who are not Berganders are treated with politeness and distance, and any opinions which they express are often answered with very mild agreement; so smooth is this treatment that outsiders frequently never realize how little they have learned.[11]

[10] British gentry have a somewhat similar affective stress, labelling extremely deprivational events "a bore."

It has been suggested that a sender may convey misinformation, both linguistically and expressively, and that he may convey insufficient information, both linguistically and expressively. In the interests of completeness, a final possibility must be considered. The sender may convey unserious information. A complex relation between context, expressive cues, and linguistic content of the message establishes the assumption that recipients are not to give credence to the sender's message and that the sender is not to be made responsible for what he has said. Recipients are officially meant to understand that what is conveyed to them, especially the linguistic components of the message they receive, is exactly what the sender does not believe; what the sender does believe is left an open question. The right to be unserious is a right to play at communication[12]; it represents an important communication license and it is employed in many different ways for many different purposes. It should be understood that almost any particular piece of information, linguistic or expressive,

[11] It is sometimes claimed that "expressive" withdrawal on the part of crofters in Bergand is related to their historical status in relation to the Lairds. Until the crofting act of 1895, a landlord had the right to increase rent without warning and in any amount. Widely appreciated tradition has it that any show of prosperity on the part of a crofter would have immediately led to an increase in his rent. Hence, it is felt that crofters had no motive for "bettering" themselves, and that there was a natural reason to conceal, physically and verbally, the slightest gain in wealth and one's plans and feelings in general.

[12] The best treatment of unseriousness that I know of may be found in Kurt Riezler, "Play and Seriousness," *J. of Philosophy*, XXXVIII, 505–517. A sender may (for many different motives) play at play, or, in this case, treat unseriousness unseriously, by attempting to keep the note of levity from his voice as long as possible and by attempting to mimic completely the serious expressive tone normally associated with the linguistic message being sent. This communication game will be considered later.

can be communicated seriously or unseriously, depending on the context and the spirit of the communication. A decision on the part of a sender to treat a matter unseriously is, of course, a quite serious thing in most cases; this decision can be employed by recipients as a source of impression about the sender. It would seem that efforts on the part of a sender to define his message unseriously are usually acknowledged and accredited by recipients. If a sender's attempt to maintain an unserious definition of the situation is unacceptable to recipients, they cannot hold him responsible for the linguistic component of his message but they can hold him responsible for a breach of good taste and for improper joke making. In Dixon, the art of unseriousness seemed to be highly developed. Three special ways of talking are set aside for this purpose: simulated baby-talk; simulated Public School accents; and formulation of a message in no-longer-current forms of Bergand dialect. "Straight-faced" teasing and mock affront are also employed extensively.[13]

It has been suggested that a sender may attempt to exert control over the other's response to him by inhibiting his spontaneous response to the situation and conveying, instead, misinformation, inadequate information, and unserious information. Thus an actual message may contain information which purposely obscures from view the real feelings and thoughts of the sender. Recipients may, of course, come to realize that the sender is interested in controlling the impression given, and they may come to anticipate a distortive or tactical element in the messages they receive. In order to get through the screen of distortions, evasions, omissions, etc., to the "real" feelings and conceptions of the sender, recipients may have to examine each message to find out what can be accepted at "face value" and what has to be analyzed and translated so as to reveal the real information that is hidden by it.[14] In the terminology of cryptography, the recipient may find that part of the message is "clear," that is, it can be taken at its face value, and that another part or the message is "coded," that is, it is distortion of some kind and must be decoded before providing truthful information.

We usually feel that clear information is conveyed by expressive emotional behavior during times of crisis and that coded information comes to us through linguistic messages when a person is "on his guard." This may be usually the case but it is not necessarily so. Occasionally a sender communicates linguistically his real feelings and thoughts. Thee significant point here is that moral norms seem to develop regulating the amount and the place for clarity and coding in messages in a particular situation. Further, the sender and the recipient each develops his own version as to what part of the message is coded and what part is clear; they each develop a version of

[13] Another favorite mode of unseriousness, but of a somewhat more formal kind, is play-acting—a very popular form of amusement on the island. During the year, skits and plays are put on at least two socials in each of the communities. Certain kinds of skits, such as ones involving ministers, are felt to be in bad taste by some of the more "fundamentalist" of the crofters. In Capital City, where an annual drama festival is held, plays that are too realistically dramatic, such as Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, are also felt by some to be improper vehicles for the stage.

[14] One decoding method is to treat the sender's choice from the many possible modes or distortion as an expression or the sender.

the discrepancy between clear and coded parts of the message. In conversational interaction, then, we find an interesting set of discrepancies: a socially permitted discrepancy defined as appropriate for situations like the given one; the "objective" discrepancy which in fact exists between the coded and the clear information in the given situation; the opinion of the sender and of the recipient as to what is in fact the objective discrepancy between the clear and coded parts of the message. Discrepancies between these several discrepancies provide one way of describing certain kinds of interpersonal communication problems.

When persons are engaged in conversational interaction, those who are recipients seem to participate in two streams of signs, linguistic signs and expressive signs. At the sane time, those who send messages of a linguistic kind seem to participate chiefly in the purely linguistic aspect of their own behavior. Thus, if the term communication be employed broadly to cover the process by which a recipient acquires both streams of signs (receiving one, taking the other), then we see that communication is usually asymmetrical; the sender is involved in one stream of signs, the recipients in two. As Simmel suggests:

> . . . all of human intercourse rests on the fact that everybody knows somewhat more about the other than the other voluntarily reveals to him . . . [15]

[15] Simmel, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

When the expressive stream of signs is cut off, as it can be in mediated communication, then real problems of understanding arise. This is nicely described by Whyte in his discussion of the difficulties arising in restaurants from the use of mechanical devices for transmitting orders from waitresses to cooks:

> To build better teamwork in the supply system, management needs to think in terms of communication and status. We have seen clearly that mechanical devices are not an adequate substitute for face-to-face communication. Nor is this simply because the particular words that come over the public address system, teleautograph, or phone are sometimes misunderstood. We make our judgment as to other people not alone through the bare words we utter but through the way we express ourselves, through our gestures and facial expressions, and through our past experience with this relationship, which tells us how to interpret the other man's behavior. Nearly all of this background for adjustment, understanding, and cooperation is lost when people are separated so that interaction is filtered through mechanical devices.[16]

[16] William F. Whyte, *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry* (New York: McGraw-Hill; 1948), p. 60.

In his essay entitled, "Behind Our Masks," Park makes much the same point:

> It is curious and interesting that this character that we call human should be so intimately connected with expressiveness. Human interest, as we ordinarily use that phrase, attaches to anything that is

> "expressive"; that is, to anything that suggests, symbolizes or reveals sentiments and passions in others of which we are immediately conscious in ourselves. The faces we know have no secrets for us. For that reason, if for no other, we feel secure and at home with them as we do not among less familiar faces. . . . One of the first and most important discoveries the one who meets an alien people for the first time is likely to make, is that, different as they seem, most strange people, when you come to know them, turn out to be human, like ourselves. It always requires an effort of imagination to realize this. It is because their faces are for us not expressive; and we, in turn, do not respond to sentiments whose expression we are not able to read.[17]

[17] Robert Ezra Park, *op. cit.*, pp. 252–253.

We have suggested that a sender often has reason to attempt to control the response that his messages evoke and hence has reason to attempt to control "with malice aforethought" the expressive component of his behavior. A limited amount of this instrumental use of an essentially non-instrumental aspect of behavior is socially permissible, especially in certain situations, as in greetings and farewells, where a certain amount of ungenuine expressive behavior is permissible, although strong sanctions are exerted against those who are felt to have affected expressive behavior at inappropriate times. Further, a certain additional amount of calculated employment of one's expressive behavior is no doubt accomplished without detection. In general, however, it seems that a sender cannot tamper with what ought to be the expressive component of his communication, or even became aware of the probable effect on recipients of this component, without this concern itself being communicated in an expressive way. The asymmetrical character of the communication process thus remains, but it occurs at a somewhat different level. The recipient checks up on the linguistic component by means of what ought to be the genuinely expressive halo of signs associated with it, and then checks up on this presumed expressive behavior by examining the fugitive stylistic features of it that are almost impossible to feign.

It has been suggested that a sender is often motivated to restrict the information which he advertently or inadvertently makes available about himself, and that a recipient is motivated to acquire as much information about the sender as possible. We often find, then, that conversational interaction involves a constant game of concealment and search, and that in this game a given player will usually be better at the task of discovering things about the other than at the task of concealing things from him.[18] For example, a crofter's wife has admitted to me (and I have also observed) that in order to find out whether a guest "really" likes the food he is being served, she does not listen to his words of praise, which courtesy demands of him, but observes the rapidity with which he raises the food to his mouth and the zest with which he chews it. Such cues to the attitude

[18] Perhaps here it should also be noted that in circles conversant with Freudian doctrine, "slips" are taken, jokingly or otherwise, as a revelation of "real" feelings; since slips are apparently in no way subject to conscious control, they may convey embarrassing information, or what is taken to be embarrassing information. The doctrine that slips are "significant" adds new hazards to the concealer, gives new power to the searcher.

of an actor are extremely difficult to distort. Extreme applications of this game of concealment and search, operating at an institutionalized level, are found in the application of modern projective testing and the use of laboratory police methods.

For a close analysis of conversational interaction, it is useful to give consideration to the level of care that a recipient feels he must exert in regard to the reception of a particular message. It is also useful to know to what lengths the recipient feels he must go in order to find clear information in the message or in order to decipher the coded information. At the lowest level of sophistication in the game of concealment and search we find this: the sender transmits a message which he implicitly assumes the recipient will take at face value, as consisting wholly of clear information; at the same level the recipient assumes that the message contains clear and coded components and that the sender is unaware that this discrimination is being made. At the next level of sophistication, the sender takes into consideration the recipient's double assumption, namely that the message has both clear and coded components and that the sender is not aware that this discrimination is being made by the recipient. In poker and in other social contexts, this is called bluffing. At the same level of sophistication, the recipient maintains the usual asymmetry of the communication process by perceiving the bluff and guiding his response accordingly. At a third level, we have the practice whereby a sender bluffs that he is bluffing and a recipient bluffs that he is being taken in by a bluff. An infinite regress is imaginable, but three levels in this process seem to be all that we need to consider in most situations.

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In Chapter IV, a clearcut analytical distinction was made between linguistic behavior, as an intentioned and instrumental activity, and expressive behavior, as an impulsive, non-rational aspect of behavior, having nothing to do with communication in the narrow sense of that term. However, in the present chapter it has been necessary to recombine these two modes of behavior in an intricate way. For one thing, recipients exploit the expressive behavior of a sender as a source of impression about him. Secondly, the sender may attempt to exploit the fact that this exploitation occurs and attempt to express himself in a way that is calculated to impress the recipient in a desired way. What on the surface is expressive behavior becomes, then, in a sense, instrumental behavior.

Let us restate and amplify slightly the ways in which expressive behavior and linguistic behavior intermingle and complicate each

other. First. we find that the recipient, unbeknownst to the sender, derives information about the sender by examining his expressive behavior. This expressive stream of signs does not involve the sender in an active communicative role; it adds to his active role as a linguistic communicator a passive role as an expressive object. If the sender then becomes aware that he has conveyed two streams of information, one linguistic and one expressive, his role as an expressive object becomes a little less passive. Further, the sender may realize beforehand that the expressive component of his behavior will be audited, and attempt, in a surreptitious way, to enact the kind of expressive behavior which is likely to call forth the kind of response that he wishes to evoke from his recipients. The sender may be successful in his bluff or detected at it; in either case, expressive behavior takes on an instrumental function and becomes an activity more closely akin to what we think or as communication. Finally, the sender may modify his expressive behavior "with malice aforethought," at the same time openly conveying that this calculated display of expressive behavior is intentional. This sometimes seems to be the case with certain conventionalized gestures of respect and approval and with "etiquette" in general.[19] Here a certain amount of feigning (and deceit) is felt to be socially permissible. In these cases, expressive behavior becomes an active form of communication. However, intentionally employed expressive behavior does differ from linguistic behavior in significant ways. Intentionally employed expressive behavior, however "conventionalized" it becomes, must take the form of behavior that could possibly be unselfconsciously or spontaneously expressive, and, as in the case of genuinely expressive behavior, the sender cannot be made officially responsible for having conveyed the information carried by it. Thus we are able to see that official signals, such as raising one's hand for attention, which form part of linguistic behavior, may be quite similar in appearance to intentionally employed expressive gestures, such as raising one's hat to a woman, and yet the first sign is part of an officially accredited aspect of communication—what might be called the formal aspect—while the second sign is part of an unofficial or informal aspect of communication.

We find, then, when we examine persons engaged in conversational interaction, that a very complex dialectic is in progress between the formal or linguistic component of communication and the informal or expressive component of communication and that the latter itself contains a host of messages which differ among themselves in the degree to which they approach what we usually think of as active communication.

[19] It is extremely difficult to make judgments concerning the degree of unself-conscious spontaneity involved in the performance of a given piece of social ritual or ceremony. It seems that one can say, however, that forms of etiquette which seem arbitrary, empty gestures at the time they are consciously learned may easily come, with the passage of years, to be unthinking and genuinely expressive aspects of one's behavior.

It has been suggested that both sender and recipient can be made explicitly responsible for a linguistic message, the sender for having transmitted it and the recipient for having received it. Playing in and around this major theme, there are many variations and melodies, which now embellish, now oppose, now develop, now reinforce, the dominant theme. These variations are conveyed by expressive behavior and provide for a somewhat irresponsible kind of communication; the sender cannot be explicitly and specifically held accountable for the content of these messages, and the recipient has the right to act as if he has not received them. The contrapuntal interweaving of responsible transmission with irresponsible transmission seems to make for flexibility. Persons can give lip service to a message that has been accepted or that is acceptable, while at the same time conveying by informal expressive means information that would disrupt the working acceptance if it were conveyed linguistically.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the flexibility provided by the interweaving of the two components of communication is to be found in what is called in everyday terms "innuendo." Innuendo occurs when the informal expressive component of communication carries information that is radically opposed to or different from the information carried by the linguistic component and when, at the same time, the sender conveys the fact that he expects the recipient to be impressed by this divergent expressive component. Sometimes innuendo is used by a sender to convey compliments which he is not in a position to deliver explicitly; usually, apparently, innuendo is employed as a means of conveying disagreements, criticisms, and depreciatory judgments which might put the working acceptance in jeopardy were they conveyed linguistically. Often innuendo is conveyed by statements made "unseriously."[20]

[20] In general there is a sense in which the two forms of communication license, unseriousness and innuendo, are the reverse of each other, even though they may both add flexibility and adaptability to conversational interaction. In the case of unseriousness, the recipient is obliged to overlook the linguistic component of the message, which, if taken seriously, would disrupt the working acceptance. In the case of innuendo, the recipient is obliged to overlook the expressive component, which, if conveyed linguistically, would disrupt the working acceptance. Innuendo provides an explicit agreement while conveying the tact that one really doesn't exist; unseriousness provides an explicit disagreement while conveying the fact that one really exists. When unseriousness is pressed into the service or innuendo we obtain a serious use of unseriousness; the great frequency with which this communication arrangement is employed should not lead us to underestimate the complexity and subtlety of the arrangement.

# *Chapter VI: Indelicate Communication*

doi

It was suggested that the actor, as a participant in the game of concealment and search, exerts self-control over information about himself which he provides to others. Whether properly or improperly, whether he is or is not detected in his effort, the actor guides some of his communications by an appreciation of their likely effect upon the persons who receive them, this appreciation being guided in turn by the indications that recipients make of the response a proposed line of action will evoke from them. Spontaneous expression of feelings is partly inhibited and approriate feelings are, in part, conveyed. Accommodation, working acceptance, and tentative harmony are the usual result. If a working acceptance cannot be managed, embarrassment, ill-ease, and confusion are often the result. Withdrawal, conflict, or abrupt alteration in relationships may also occur. In all of these cases, however, the individual knows that he is communicating and knows to whom he is communicating. Although he may be unaware of all that he communicates, he is in a position to exert discretion over a part, at least, of what he conveys, and he is in a position to make use of what he can learn by examining closely the indicated response of recipients to him. If he is not able to exert prior calculation over all that he conveys, he is at least in a position to benefit from a similar incapacity on the part of those who respond to him. Thus, whether we examine cases of working acceptance, withdrawal, conflict, embarrassment, or shift to alternate bases of treatment, we find the general factors of awareness and partial control.

There are a number of marginal situations, however, in which the general factors of awareness and partial control cannot operate, or are not allowed to operate. In these situations, the actor finds himself under direct observation of others but is not in a position to modify his behavior by means of indications of the response he is calling forth from them; corrective feedback is not possible. The strategies which the actor usually employs to protect himself, to protect those about whom he is talking, and to protect the interaction itself, cannot be employed. We shall refer here to indelicate communication arrangements.

One form of indelicate communication occurs in those professional-client relationships for which certain forms of social irresponsibility are heavily institutionalized. Priests, psychiatrists, and lawyers convincingly guarantee a client that certain kinds of reprisals and moral judgments will not be made, no matter what the client conveys to them by word or deed. It is in the client's self-interest to be honest and frank, while at the same time the professional defines himself as someone who cannot and does not take offense. In such a context, it is possible for the client to maintain, of his own free will, a communication situation which is so counter to his ordinary protective strategies as chronically to cause him embarrassment.

Another form of indelicate communication occurs in those cases where a person is explicitly obliged to speak honestly if not frankly and at the same time accept the social consequences of having done so. Prenuptual exchanges of confidences provide one example. Another example is found in the technique employed in everyday conversation of turning on a sender, interrupting him, and asking him in a special tone of voice if something he has just said is actually and really true. Evidence given under oath at a trial or hearing is a formal example. (This suggests one reason why these scenes are frequently embarrassing.) In all these cases, the sender is given special warning that any deviation from truth will be fully held against him; he is thus forced to be untactful, to contradict the image he has projected of himself or the image others have projected of themselves.

The two forms of indelicate communication that have been considered—the first where a person is allowed to be untactful and the second where a person is not allowed to be tactful—involve communication situations where the usual amount of strategic control over the 1inguistic components of messages does not prevail. There are a number of allied forms of indelicate communication which differ from those mentioned in that the sender is not aware that he is not employing the usual amount of calculation and control, or, if he is aware of his lack of control, he is free to exert control yet incapable of doing so.

We have the case where a person involuntarily frees himself from the inclination toward concealment, as in narco-hypnosis (and anesthesia generally), and the case where he more or less voluntarily does the same thing, as in inebriation. An interesting indelicate situation arises when an actor comes under direct observation of a person of whose capacity in this regard the actor is not aware. In everyday terms, recipients of this kind are said to be spying. We are familiar, for example, with the use of dark glasses and veils as a means of concealing from an observed person the fact that he is being observed or as a means of concealing the kind of response that observation of him

is arousing. So also, wall mirrors are sometimes used as a means of observing persons who think they are not being observed or, at least, not being observed from that angle. A few examples may be given from the field.

> In Dixon it is a very common practice for persons in a cottage to look out of the kitchen window every ten or fifteen minutes or when they hear the croft collies barking. In this way, the inhabitants have ample warning of the approach of anyone, and they have time to arrange themselves and the room so that the image of themselves which they wish to communicate to the visitor will not be contradicted by what the visitor sees. This mechanism of forewarning is apparently possible because there are no trees and frequently no neighboring buildings to obstruct the view from a window. A visiting crofter therefore feels that the warning of a knock on the door is not necessary, and frequently neglects to knock. (The visitor may, however, make a slight pause or shufflling sound before entering.) Since the rooms in a crofter's cottage have very little light, it is possible to observe the approach of a visitor without the visitor being able to discover that he is being observed. Crofters enjoy the practice of comparing the facial expressive behavior of a visitor just before he enters the cottage with his behavior just after he enters.
>
> In the primary grades in the Dixon school, pupils sometimes have to withstand scrutiny by visitors. In some cases the stimulus of "personal interaction" with strangers is too much for the pupils to handle with equanimity; at the same time the "news value" of a visitor to the school may be too great to allow a pupil to turn his attention elsewhere. Some pupils employ the solution of covering their faces with their hand to shield themselves from the gaze of the stranger, while at the same time examining him through the small openings between their fingers.
>
> In Dixon there is a common practice of using a pocket telescope for the purpose of observing one's neighbors without being observed in the act of observing them. In this way it is possible to keep a constant check upon what part of the annual cycle of work a neighbor is engaged in and how rapidly he is progressing with it. It is also possible in this way to keep informed as to who is visiting whom. (This use of telescopes is apparently related to the physical distance between crofts, to the absence of trees, and to the strong maritime tradition of the island.)
>
> In the hotel, the maids would observe the arrival of new guests through the kitchen window. Differences in light intensity made this a one-way possibility and gave the maids a chance to arrive at an initial appraisal of the new guests and to communicate this to one another before it was necessary to have any actual contact with the guests.

Just as persons can be observed without their knowing it, so also their verbal exchanges can be audited without their knowing it. We are familiar with the practice of eavesdropping on conversations, the

practice of reading another's mail, and the practice of listening in on a party telephone line.

In the case of spying and the several kinds of eavesdropping, the sender is prevented from modifying his communication in accordance with its probable effect upon the person who receives it because the sender is not aware (or is not aware in time) that the person *is* receiving it. Senders may attempt to guard against such an eventuality by trying to behave in such a way as to give no offense to the image any unobserved observer might have of himself or of the sender.[1] This kind of communication super-ego is especially effective in guiding the conduct of persons who are in fact unobserved by anyone.

An interesting complication in these indelicate communication arrangements occurs when an individual is being spied upon or overheard, knows this to be the case, and tries not to shatter the illusion of the irregular recipient. In this case, the sender may feel that he is in an excellent position to delude the recipient in any desired direction, presumably on the grounds that the recipient will not exercise customary scepticism in regard to what he oversees or overhears. This constitutes a kind of bluff.

[1] In Western society there is amoral rule, often followed, that a person who happens into a situation where he can observe others or overhear them, without this fact being apparent to the others, ought to warn them in some way by means of a tactful cue. This warning allows the others to take precautions against communicating anything that will be offensive in any way.

# *Chapter VII: Sign Situations*

doi

When persons are in each other's immediate presence, and especially when they are engaged together in conversational interaction, important informational conditions obtain. Each participant is in a position to convey information about himself both linguistically and expressively, especially information having to do with his conception of himself and his conception of the others present. An embarrassingly rich context of events is available to serve as vehicles for signs of this kind; some of these events are simultaneously part of the task organization in which the persons find themselves, while some of these events serve no explicitly recognized task.

When persons are in each other's presence in a given situation, a definition usually prevails as to how each is to be treated. This definition of the situation is made possible by the fact that each participant possesses known determinants or qualifications which select out for others which of the different possible categories of treatment is to be accorded him. A corollary of this definitional process is that all qualifications which a person possesses which act as selective determinants of treatment in other situations but which are officially denied as irrelevant in the current situation must be ignored. The information which these irrelevant determinants or social characteristics carry may be received, but there is an obligation on the part of the recipient to act as if the information is in no way a determinant or a selector of behavior. This involves, on the part of recipients, suppression of response to information. Further, persons must not bring forth such irrelevant determinants as are not already apparent.

When persons are in each other's immediate presence and are engaged in activity which provides vehicles that are well designed to express actual or possible conceptions that persons have of one another, it may inadvertently become difficult to suppress the flow of information that is false or that has been defined as irrelevant. For reasons outside the personal aims of any of the participants, and outside their personal control, events may occur which are so aptly expressive of important irrelevant valuations, or important

potential but not actual valuations, that participants will feel either that an improper evaluation has been made or that other participants might feel this has occurred. Attention is therefore drawn away from the activity that has been in progress and is brought to bear, at an inappropriate time, on matters of status, and especially on expressive signs by which relative rank is conveyed. At times like these, tension over signs seems to develop and we have what might be called a sign situation. In so far as any particular participant is forced, through the flow of ordinary action in the situation, to act in such a way as to produce a sign vehicle that is accidentally and incidentally well suited to convey irrelevant or incorrect social information, we may say that he is faced with a sign situation.

Sign situations are constantly occurring; on the occasions when they do not occur, they must constantly be guarded against. There are a fairly large number of strategies of a preventive kind for avoiding the occurrence of these difficulties and there are a fairly large number of strategies of a corrective kind for resolving these difficulties when it has proven impossible to avoid them. These strategies are so widely known and used that we may think of them as institutionalized.

Perhaps the most obvious technique for handling a sign situation and resolving the dilemma that it introduces is to employ a principle of randomization. By means of this technique, an indulgence or a deprivation can be differentials distributed (in time or by amount) among participants in a way such that none of them is likely to interpret the differential allocation as an expression of differential status. Randomization, then, is a way of basing distribution on a principle that is patently independent of differential status. Like other such strategies, it is a way of ensuring that no offense will be taken where none is meant but where offense is likely. Flipping coins, cutting for high card in order to determine priority of play during a game are common examples of randomization. Serial ordering of persons on a basis of alphabetical priority is another case in point.

In the case of randomization, an extra-social principle is utilized as a means of demonstrating that officially irrelevant qualifications have not been employed. Another way of solving the same problem is to distribute differential treatment in accordance with a social principle of precedence which involves social qualifications in which no one present is very actively concerned or in which there is very little open to dispute. Thus those who approve of protocol claim that it is a device not for expressing social distinctions but rather for preventing the occurrence of such expressions. By taking note of every event which might be taken by some as an expression of relative status or relative approval, and establishing an order for these events based

on distinctions in rank established beforehand, assurance can be given that nothing not already taken for granted will be expressed. Another important example derives from service relations, where the principle of "first come, first served" is commonly employed. Thus customers are induced to interpret the order in which they are served as expressive of nothing more significant than their order of arrival. In the same way, the principle of seniority is often invoked in formal organizations as a tactful means of distributing differential rewards. (These practices have the important incidental function of stressing the reality and importance of the situation at hand as opposed to the reality of the participants' irrelevant statuses.)

In this connection it should be noted that we have statuses of an almost ceremonial kind, such as the very old, the very sick, the young, and the "weaker sex"; and that in certain contexts the incumbents of these statuses can be given preferences which are of very little value in themselves but which might otherwise be allocated in an offending way. The potentially troublesome privileges that are neutralized in this way convey respect that is more akin to light pity than to envy. It should be added that there are occasions when these statuses provide a disturbing issue and at these times they cannot, of course, play a merely ceremonial role. A woman who is an ardent feminist may be offended if her sexual status is not allowed to remain irrelevant as a determinant of treatment in certain kinds of situations, even though she may appreciate that little significance is attached to the differential treatment she is accorded. So also, a man who is not quite old may be offended if he is given the empty privileges sometimes accorded to the aged.

A very general way of dealing with a sign situation is that of apology or exorcism, a verbal technique for convincing a potentially offended person that no offense is meant or an offended person that the offense was not intentional. Apologies frequently take the form of a well-patterned interchange between offender and recipient of the offense. In this way an act can sometimes be cleared of the expressive function that has been or might be imputed to it.

By merely entering a conversation or place where conversation may occur, an individual performs an act that is well designed to serve as a vehicle for expressive interest, involvement, or approval. Similarly, by leaving a place where communication is occurring, the individual performs an act that could easily be taken as expressive of disinvolvement, lack of interest, and disapproval. However, on many occasions an individual may desire to enter or leave the communication presence of others for instrumental reasons unrelated to the expressive use to which these acts lend themselves, or for social reasons which he desires to conceal. The individual is thus faced

with a sign situation. If the technical motive for the act is sufficiently clear and urgent, then this fact alone usually seems enough to resolve the tension, giving the individual license to more or less neglect the potential expressiveness of his act. Everyone is willing to make allowances for emergencies; the chief problem is to convince others that one's behavior has been suddenly determined by one.[1]

A related strategy is based on the use of "natural breaks" in communication. Persons frequently postpone their arrival or departure until such time as its potential expressive value is minimal.

The social life of Dixon is full of ways in which persons may be given offense unintentionally and of ways in which the likelihood of doing this can be avoided or neutralized. In the shops, customers, regardless of sex, age, kin or class status, are served in order of priority of presence in the shop; a shopper who breaks this order must broadcast a very good reason for doing so. Those who organize the annual concerts make sure that all three communities are represented as performers so that no one community will take offense. At billiards, right of play is determined by the number of games one has waited, and first play at the start of any particular game is determined by flipping a coin or guessing which hand contains the ball. There seem, in fact, to be few situations where the actor does not have to ask himself the questions: am I being tactful; will I be thought unfair. The larger the number of events that can serve as signs, the more difficult the problem. Perhaps it is in face-to-face communication that the greatest number of events occur which might possibly be taken as expressive. Hence face-to-face communication can be seen as a scene of diplomatic labor, where participants must expend a great deal of effort ensuring that others do not receive the "wrong" impression.

It was suggested earlier that conversational interaction may be viewed as an informational game, the goal of the game being to learn as much as possible about the other while at the same time controlling as much as possible the information about oneself that the other obtains. The rules of the game establish permissible times, places, and amounts of deceit and feigning, and provide negative sanctions for players who are caught breaking the rules. It is a game of informational management.

This view must be broadened, however. The instrumental setting in which the actor enters into conversational interaction which others is constantly providing, or threatening to provide, situations and events that can easily be accepted by others as expressions of the actors' sentiments and conceptions. In many cases, these impressions do more than "give the actor away." These impressions often make the actor responsible for conceptions which are offensive to recipients or unfavorable to the actor, and often these impressions are either

[1] According to book-etiquette, the expressive implications of refusing an invitation must counteracted, at least formally, by reference to a real or fictive prior engagement or obligation of some kind. An invitation, once accepted, may be broken tactfully only on grounds of sudden business, ill-health, or death of a relative. Similarly, on leaving a party early, some "legitimate" excuse must be given.

not justified or have to do with sentiments which the actor possesses but which he had definitely been trying to suppress. For the actor, others may come to be seen as sacred objects. The social attributes of recipients must be constantly honored; where these attributes have been dishonored, propitiation must follow. The actor must be on his guard almost all the time and carefully poised in his action. He must conduct himself with great ritual care, threading his way through one situation, avoiding another, counteracting a third, lest he unintentionally and unwittingly convey a judgment of those present that is offensive to them. Even more than being a game of informational management, conversational interaction is a problem of ritual management.

The ritual model for social interaction has been poorly treated in the literature, perhaps because of the stress given by G. H. Mead and by Weber to the fact that a social relationship, and hence social interaction, was a product of *two* persons taking *each other's* actions into consideration in pursuing their own action. This stress seems to have given an instrumental flavor to our thinking about the kinds of considerations we show in regard to others: the implication is that we *take into consideration* the actions of others (the better to achieve our personal ends, whatever these may be) and not so much that we *give consideration to* other persons. By "consideration" we have tended to mean calculation, not considerateness.

A case may be made for the view that the best model for an object to which we give consideration is not a person at all, but a sacred idol, image, or god.[2] It is to such sacred objects that we show in extreme what we show to persons. We feel that these objects possess some sacred value, whether positive or purifying, or negative and polluting, and we feel disposed to perform rites before these objects. These rites we perform as frequently and compulsively as the sacred value of the object is great. These worshipful acts expression our adoration, or fear, or hate, and serve for the idol as periodic assurances that we are keeping faith and deserve to be in its favor. When in the idol's immediate presence we act with ritual care, appreciating that pious actions may favorably dispose the idol toward us and that impious actions may anger the idol and cause it to perform angry actions against us. Persons, unless they are of high office, do not have as much sacred power or *mana* as do idols, and hence need not be treated with as much ceremony. An idol is to a person as a rite is to etiquette.

[2] This general view I base on Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain (New York: Macmillan, 1926), pp. 240–272.

# Part Four

## *The Concrete Units of Conversational Communication*

# *Chapter VIII: Introduction*

doi

At this point it seems proper to provide a more systematic statement of some of the assumptions and definitions which underlie some of the terms and usages appearing in the first three parts. At the same time it is also necessary to provide some very elementary definitions as a background for what is to follow.

A body of information that is transferred from one place to another is commonly called a message. A message involves a configuration of signs and the transmission of physical carriers, or what have come to be called vehicles, of these signs. We usually think of vehicles as issuing from a sign-source, and we think of vehicles as being impelled form a source with a sign-impulse of given force or intensity, and as being impelled in a particular direction. The process of impulsion is usually called transmission, and arrangement of vehicles for the purpose of transmission is usually called encoding. A physical field in which vehicles of a given kind can be transmitted may be called a medium. We usually think of a medium in reference to the particular type of equipment—human and non-human—which must be employed if the signs transmitted in the medium are to be received. The source of sign-impulse may be called a transmitter and the agency which receives the signs a receiver. It is to be noted that the terms so far defined pertain to the physical aspects of communication, not to the social setting in which communication occurs.

When an individual exercises his physical capacity as a transmitter or receiver, we find that he may also take on communication roles of a social kind. The individual may be held to be personally responsible for the content of a given message and for having initially transmitted it; the message in question is thought to be *his* message. Where these conditions prevail, we shall say that the individual has the social role of sender. On the other hand, the individual may be held to be the one for whom the message is specifically and admittedly intended; the message in question is thought to terminate properly with him. Where these conditions prevail, we shall say that the individual has the social role of recipient.

The social roles of sender and recipient seem to be the most basic ones in communication, but certain additional ones are clearly defined and heavily institutionalized in our society. A person may perform the role of drafter, this role entailing the rough formulation of messages that are later checked over and authorized by the sender who will be made responsible for the content of the message. Specialists of this kind may be found in large-scale formal organizations, and are not responsible, in certain ways, for the message which they help to formalize. A person may perform the task of relayer, receiving a message from its sender (or from another relayer), encoding it for retransmission and retransmitting it to a recipient (or to another relayer). This is the case with stenographers and telegraphers. Finally, a person may perform the task of courier, conveying a message from one point to another without knowing what is in the message. This is the role that postmen take.

Persons who have the task of drafting messages, or relaying them, or carrying them, have the social duty of acting as if they were merely instruments, not persons. They operate under a strong moral obligation not to take advantage of the position in which their occupational duties place them.

It is apparent that persons who are employed merely to assist in the task of communicating may abuse their position and make inappropriate use of the information their occupational role has put them in a position to receive. This would seem especially likely where those who assist in the process of communication happen to be in additional relationships to those whom they assist. Under these circumstances, effective segregation between the role of communication assistant and other roles would presumably be difficult. For example, on the island, persons who use the telephone and telegraph tend to allow for the fact that messages may not remain a secret. There is a cautionary tale about a previous telegrapher's agent who held up government notification of a rise in the price of fish for one night so that a relative could buy up the island's catch at a low price and sell it, off the island, at enormous profit.

As sender, then, is the person who initially transmits the authorized version of a message, and the recipient is the person for whom the message is intended. Usually these two roles are the basic ones, regardless of how many persons have helped to prepare, retransmit, or carry the message.

The physical capacity of persons to communicate with one another in one or more media is obviously related to the fixed physiological characteristics of man as an instrument for transmitting and receiving messages. For example, sounds with a frequency over sixteen hundred cycles per second cannot be directly used for signalling be-

tween persons, but these sounds can be used for signalling from a person to an animal and from animal to animal. The capacity to communicate is also related to variable factors which effectively increase or decrease natural human capacity. Three of these factors may be mentioned. First, there are behavioral devices such as whispering, shouting, "encoding," and focusing of attention. For example, parents frequently exclude children from communication by spelling messages out or using a language not known to their children. Governments employ similar devices in order to send messages while at the same time maintaining "security." When Berganders meet on the mainland of Britain, they sometimes make use of the Bergand dialect in order to talk to each other in a way which can be heard but not understood by those around them. Secondly, there are transmission barriers such as walls, intervening persons, and noises. For example, persons in a crowded city street can come close to each other physically without realizing that this has been the case, whereas persons who live or work where there are few intervening barriers to communication can engage in certain kinds of communication over relatively great distances. For example, most of those who fish in the ocean waters around Dixon are acquainted with one another and can identify each other's crafts (and are known to be able to do so) from a great distance. Thus when two boats come within about half a mile of each other, recognition and greeting is given by means of hand waving or tooting, and this courtesy is an expected thing. Thirdly, there are mechanical aids, such as telephones and mail services. For example, shepherds on the island often make use of a whistle and a staff as a means of increasing signalling power with respect to their sheep dogs; without these mechanical adjuncts certain kinds of land could not be readily utilized for grazing.

In order for communication to occur, certain minimum physical conditions must be satisfied. The person who transmits the message (whether in the capacity of sender or relayer) generally must be allowed to complete a meaningful unit of communication. His message must not be "jammed" by competing messages nor by disturbances which distract recipients who wish to be attentive. The recipient, obviously, must be close enough to the source of the sign-impulse to receive the message and must focus enough of his attention to make effective use of this position. Further, the signs transmitted to the recipient must be of the kind that the recipient's equipment is prepared for or geared for; in other words, the signs must be "meaningful" to the recipient. These conditions are imposed by the extra-social characteristics of the human condition, yet these conditions must be satisfied by habitual social arrangements.

In all communication situations the possibility arises that the recipient will not correctly interpret or understand the message that is conveyed to him. Whenever a relayer and/or a courier are involved as mediated agents in the conveyance of a message, additional opportunities for confusion arise. The message may become (advertently or inadvertently) lost or modified in transit.[1] Also, the message may be ascribed to someone who did not in fact send it. We may then say that communication situations vary according to the degree to which the sender can be assured that his message has been received by the persons for whom it was intended and has been correctly received by them. We may also say that situations vary according to the amount of usable proof they offer a recipient that the message received by him is the message transmitted by the sender. When communication between two persons is mediated by a rigorously institutionalized relayer, such as a telegrapher, or when there is no mediating agent, as in the case of face-to-face interaction, we frequently find that neither sender nor recipient is in a position with respect to the other to deny the existence and character of the message. When communication between two persons is mediated by an informal relayer, as in the important case where a sender tells a recipient what an absent person has said about him, we find that the absent person is usually in a position to deny that he made the statement in question. We also find that the recipient is usually in a position to act as if there were some doubt that the absent person really sent the message in question. These objective communication characteristics may account in part for the social fact that persons in our society exercise much less care in their treatment of individuals who are absent than in their treatment of individuals who are present.

The framework of this study is chiefly concerned with the kind of communication which is unassisted by mechanical devices or by persons acting in the mediating capacities of relayer or courier. We are concerned with communication between persons who are immediately present to each other, where the sender is at the same time the transmitter or physical source of the sign-impulse.[2] The justification for this limitation of scope rests on the empirical fact that persons present are treated very differently from persons absent. It appeared that a study focused on one kind of treatment could not easily deal with the other kind of treatment.

Interaction between persons who are immediately present to each other possesses some crucial communication characteristics. One of these characteristics—the "non-deniable" nature of messages—has already been mentioned; others will be considered later. None the less, the criterion of immediate presence provides a heuristic delimitation of scope, not an analytical one. From the point of view

[1] In formal organizations, practices are sometimes employed to minimize these kinds of confusion. Important words in telegrams are repeated, duplicate messages are sometimes sent in alternate media, and recipients may be required to send return evidence of having correctly received the message.

[2] In recent literature the term "small group" has been widely used to designate the research area of face-to-face interaction. There is little excuse for this usage. The term group has a relatively distinct meaning in sociology. Face-to-face interaction regularly occurs among the members of small groups, but frequently the kind of behavior which students describe when they study interaction in this context is not characteristic of persons in their capacity as members of small groups but rather of persons in their capacity as immediate interactants. The latter behavior occurs between persons who regularly have dealings with each other but who do not constitute a small group, and it even occurs between persons who come into each other's presence only once.

of communication, face-to-face interaction does not seem to present a single important characteristic that is not found—at least within certain limits—in mediated communication situations.

In the study of immediate communication, we deal with signs of which the sender is the actual physical source: sender and transmitter are one. On the whole we deal with signs transmitted by gesture and with authors signs transmitted by speech. (The olfactory medium, as in the case of perfumes and body odors, and the tactile medium, as in the case of nudges, do not seem to play a major role in immediate communication.) And for the most part, we do not deal with lines or channels of communication which are open to reception or transmission at either end but rather with zones, anywhere within which a message may be received. Persons who are within the zone where reception of a given impulse is possible are usually said to be in the range of the impulse. The shape of zones in cases of immediate communication is an important factor and is dependent upon a complex set of interdependent elements.[3]

In considering the factors which influence the shape of communication zones, we must also consider the factors which influence the effectiveness of a recipient once a zone of communication has been established. The volume of a visual or auditory zone can be increased slightly by a recipient's concentration on the source of the impulse, and the volume can be radically decreased by lack of attentiveness on the part of the recipient. In the case of visual signs, a recipient can easily shut off his receiving equipment or can redirect it so as to remove himself completely from the reception opportunities of a zone in which he finds himself. This fact, as will be seen later, underlies the practicability of certain kinds of tact. In general, the factors which influence the shape of a zone and the receptivity of a recipient play an important role in habitual communication arrangements.

Communication zones possess an obvious characteristic: as the distance between source of impulse and recipient increases, the ability of the recipient to receive the message gradually decreases. There is an obvious limit to this.

We frequently find that communication occurs in regions where there is a sharp limit to the simple inverse linear relation between distance from source and receptivity. The region may be bounded to a varying degree by transmission barriers which abruptly reduce the intensity of any sign-impulse that passes through them. The ordinary room perhaps provides the most important example of this kind of communication arrangement, where walls, ceiling, and closed door act as transmission barriers. Regions of this kind may be called bounded regions, and they may be said to vary in the degree to which they are bounded. In certain cases, then, receptivity

[3] The body of a sender is a transmission barrier from the point of view of those who are behind the sender; it is a focusing reflector from the point of view of those who are in front of him. This gives a conical-shaped stress to zones of communication, with the source of impulse at the apex of the cone. This directional effect is especially apparent in the case of visual signs, since they are propagated by waves that are lateral, not spherical. | Some important sign-vehicles involve facial expressions which can be "read" only if all parts of the surface of the face are seen in relation to one another. In such cases the apex of the cone is very narrow, so that the communication zone is effectively reduced to a narrow cylinder. This is also the case where the source of impulse is set into the face and shielded more than ordinary sources of impulse, as in the case of eye expressions. | In the case of relatively intense sound impulses, the angle of propagation approximately describes a circular, and the length of the cone can be taken as the radius of a sphere within which reception of the sign-impulse is possible. With sounds that are less intense, the effectiveness of the body as a barrier apparently varies with the frequency of the sound as well as with its intensity.

decreases gradually up to a point and then decreases sharply.

Bounded regions, of course, vary widely according to size, and the kind of communication behavior to be found in a particular community will vary with the kind of bounded regions found in it.

* * * * *

The chief focus of attention of this study is conversational interactions among persons immediately present to one another. As previously suggested, the exclusion of mediated linguistic communication is somewhat arbitrary and is justifiable on practical grounds rather than on theoretical ones. It is convenient here to make another delimitation of the scope of this study.

It appears that the information a person conveys (whether he does this in an active or a passive way) can play two different roles and be organized in two different ways. The terms "directed" and "undirected" will be used to refer to these two organizational forms.

Directed information is information which is directed at particular recipients and hearts upon a particular conversational issue, a particular object of reference, that is current at the time. This information may be conveyed by linguistic behavior. It may also be conveyed by expressive behavior of the kind we use in qualifying our linguistic statements or in responding in a truncated form to linguistic statements—in other words, the kind of expressive behavior which can be cut sufficiently short so as to add information about and only about the conversational topic of the moment. Obviously, we cannot receive directed information unless we are at the time engaged in actual conversations or in overhearing actual conversation.

Undirected information may be defined as information which is conveyed between persons who are within perceptual range of one another but who are not necessarily involved in actual conversation with one another. When, for example, an individual is engaged in conversational interaction with one cluster of persons, he does not thereby cease to provide a source of impression to those not in the cluster. By the loudness of his voice, or the extravagance of his gestures, he conveys how willing he is to allow persons in clusters other than his own continue their own conversation without undue distraction. By his demeanor and his choice of clothes he conveys the degree of respect he feels for the persons in the region and the social occasion that has brought them together. By means of the same behaviors, the individual both intentionally and unwittingly communicates something about his statuses in the wider social worlds which lie beyond the present region and occasion. The individual, further, conveys his status relative to those who are present in the

region by participating in one cluster as opposed to another or by not participating in any cluster.[4]

Undirected information, it appears, can only be communicated by means of the expressive component of behavior. Related to this is the fact that undirected information cannot easily be formulated, precisely and consciously, into a specific message; participants have strong feelings about this kind of message (perhaps because it conveys overall conceptions that the sender has about himself and others), but only vague ideas as to what exactly is being communicated.[5]

It is to be noted that in the kind of directed message where a sender makes a verbal statement to a recipient, the sender can "catch himself" half way through his message and try to modify it in accordance with what he perceives to be the response it is eliciting. If this is not possible, and he finds that his message has elicited a response that he did not wish to elicit, he can hastily add another verbal statement that is calculated to repair the damage. Corrective feedback is possible. Typically, however, this repair work is less possible in the case of inappropriate undirected messages. If a person appears at a social occasion in inappropriate attire, or intoxicated, or in the company of an undesirable person, he cannot hastily correct the unfavorable impression he may make. Often he cannot even "shut up," as he can after conveying an inappropriate directed message, but must go on transmitting the unfavorable message until he leaves the place where interaction is going on.

Undirected messages, unlike directed ones, are not supposed to be conveyed with any particular recipients in mind. Of course, a sender may employ a particular undirected message for the special purpose of influencing a specific recipient, as when a woman "dresses up" for the effect it will have on the man who is courting here. Even in such cases, however, the message remains the kind that cannot be strictly formulated, and it retains a disguise as a message that is relevant for all persons who happen to come within range of it.

Directed communication frequently takes the form of a rapid exchange, between two talkers, of statements and replies. Rapid and continued give-and-take is, in a sense, the conversational thing about conversation. Undirected communication, on the other hand, is not so clearly a part of *inter*action and *inter*change. Frequently a person's undirected messages are merely absorbed into the accumulated impression we have of him, and then by themselves they frequently do not elicit an overt response from us or, at least, an immediate overt response. It is to be noted, however, that certain undirected messages give rise to an attenuated and sluggish forms of "conversational" exchange.[6] If an actor annoys his neighbor by making too much noise or by burning ill-smelling garbage, the neighbor may, when the

[4] At parties hosts tend to feel responsible for seeing that guests "enjoy" themselves and that they "fit" socially with one another. Each type of party has its own rules as to how long a guest can remain unattached to a conversational cluster (or how frequently he may become detached from one) before this lack of involvement in directed communication becomes a sign (transmitted by undirected communication) of the guest's improper relation to the party. At formal dinners there is a rule regarding fair distribution of conversational attention to partner on the right and partner on the left; at dances there are "duty" dances; at informal parties the host frequently has the obligation of engaging in engaged persons in conversation so as to stop undirected communication of the isolate's status.

[5] Perhaps it should be noted that the medium which relies on a sense of smell seems employable for only undirected messages. There are a few exceptions, as, for example, the use of mercaptan in the air tunnels of mines as a sign of a linguistic order that danger is present. The medium which relies on a sense of touch, however, can be employed to convey directed messages—as when one recipient nudges another recipient as a means of commenting upon a particular directed message conveyed by a third person, the sender.

[6] Interaction systems of this attenuated kind are not considered in this study.

time is ripe, negatively sanction the actor, conveying the sanction by means of directed or undirected signs; in return the actor may answer with a reprisal or a reparation. However, unlike conversational interaction, exchanges of reprisals and counter-reprisals may be protracted affairs and usually involve only a few exchanges of messages. Parallels between conversational systems and undirected ones will be suggested throughout this report but will not be developed.

Undirected communication plays an important role in our social life, and yet it has been very little studied. Three important sources of undirected signs may be mentioned. First, there are clothing patterns.[7] This means of conveying one's conception of oneself and one's opinion of the social surroundings has the interesting characteristic of continuous transmission. Exception when the sender is taking a bath, in our society, his body is covered (or significantly uncovered) with materials which convey a message to anyone who comes within visual range. Secondary, there are participation patterns. The persons in whose presence an actor is seen, or the persons in whose conversations he could be participating but is not, provide sources of information about the actor. These sources, too, tend to be in continuous transmission, for there are many social situations in which the actor conveys something about himself simply by appearing in the company of no one. Thirdly, there are what might be called "location" patterns. the furnishing and decor of a person's room, office, or place of work; the size, style, and upkeep of his house; the appearance of the land immediately surrounding his house—all these are important sources of undirected signs which tell us significant things about him. Like the first-mentioned source of signs, these are in continuous transmission. Unlike clothing and participation patterns, location patterns do not follow the sender wherever he goes. A potential recipient must come to the place where the sender is habitually located and upon which he has left his mark, and frequently the recipient must gain permission from the sender to do this, before the recipient can avail himself of the information that can be found in such locations.[8]

In Dixon, there are many sources of undirected information that seem to be typical in Western society. For example, almost all adult male crofters have four levels of clothes-finery: rough work clothes; informal indoor clothes; clothes for socials and small parties; clothes for the most important occasions, such as weddings and funerals. Each of these levels is deemed appropriate for a certain range of social occasions (although much the same set of persons may meet each other at occasions in all of the ranges); inappropriate dress is considered an affront to those who perceive it and to the social occasion in which it occurs. So, also, a man in Dixon who does not have a

[7] A recent illustration of the role of clothing as undirected communication is given by Miller and Form, *Industrial Sociology* (New York: Harper, 1951), p. 356, in their description of status symbols in a garage: "This factor of clothing may be carried to a ludicrous degree. In a small garage that the authors studied a wide gamut of clothing symbolized gradations of status. The owner worked in this 'business' suit. The stock and order clerk wore no special uniform but had to remove his coat and worked in his shirt sleeves. The supervisor of the mechanics in the shop also removed his coat, but he wore a very non-functional piece of clothing, a white smock. The mechanics wore full-length blue jumpers, and the apprentices and cleanup men wore overalls or discarded clothing, of darker hues. Although this hierarchy of garb was not formally instituted, it was nonetheless scrupulously observed. No one could presume to rise above his status by wearing the costume "inappropriate" to his job."

[8] In Britain a very important source of undirected information is found in speech patterns. Range of vocabulary, volume and pitch of sound, dialect, intonation, accent—all of these signs help to place a person socially and regionally, even though the recipient overhears only a snatch of the linguistic message that is being communicated. Like clothing patterns, this form of undirected communication follows the sender wherever he goes; unlike clothing patterns, speech patterns are not in continuous transmission—a speaker can shut up.

"clean" shave conveys thereby a slight disrespect for the persons and institutional with which he has dealings.

Because Dixon is a rural community that is small in geographical size and uncluttered with communication barriers such as trees, some communication problems arise in connection with undirected signs. The state of one's crops and the size of one's stock are physically present for everyone to see. This possibility is increased by the custom of many crofters of carrying around or having in the house a small pocket telescope. Thus an important aspect of one's wealth cannot be concealed from others. This makes it difficult for crofters to practice strategies that members of other occupational groups often employ, namely, overestimating one's wealth in some circumstances, concealing it in others, and underestimating in still others. Nor can one crofter conceal from another the state he has reached in the annual work cycle or the tactics he is employing in performing the basic croft tasks. Thus, for example, errors of judgment or lack of work skill cannot be concealed. The two fishing crews find themselves in the same position. More than half the members of the community are in a position to observer directly the times when the boats put out and the times when the boats do not. Crews that go out in bad weather have no protection from residents who judge such actions to be unwise. Crews that do not put out in bad weather have no way of concealing this face from residents and must face the scorn of ex-sailors. So, also, the exact catch of one boat can be seen and compared with the catch obtained by another boat, or the catch that should have been made. Large catches bring claims from creditors and friends; small catches bring judgments of low ability. The crofter and the fisherman thus have little informational control over their work.[9]

The fact that a crofter must do much of his work in the open, before the eyes of the community, as it were, tends to throw into clear relief any social change that occurs in regard to crofting customs. As soon as one crofter makes an innovation, others find that they become identified as persons who do or do not use the new technique. Thus the last fifteen years has seen a radical shift in plowing techniques, a shift from the use of horses to the use of tractors. Apparently those in the vanguard of the change fifteen years ago were as clearly marked out in the community for this fact as are those who today still use horses. Since the crofter, during the last fifty years, has been moving from the status of a peasant-tenant to the status of an independent progressive farmer, the visible ownership and use of costly modern capital goods is a means of saying something and having something said as well as a means of doing something.

Another illustration of the interplay between social change and

[9] The importance of this kind of control for the protection of the worker is brought out nicely in Donald Roy, *op. cit*.

conditions of undirected communication in Dixon may be seen in the changing conceptions as regards the work day. Traditionally the number of hours worked in a day was determined by the urgency of the task in the current phase of the croft work cycle, by the availability of light to work by, and by the fitness of the weather. During the darker winter days, when the sun rises at about ten and sets at about three-thirty, crofters sometimes stay in bed, where it is warm, until eleven or twelve in the morning, and, except for regular chores such as feeding the stock and doing repairs, not much is done by the menfolk. During the other seasons, basic croft tasks, such as lambing, casting of peats, plowing, and sowing, which have to be accomplished within the right calendar period, may keep a crofter and his family working as many hours as they are physically capable of. It was not rare for crofters to rise at three o'clock during the lambing season, and at four o'clock during the peat-casting season. It was not rare for hay to be raked and stacked by moonlight. However, apparently in connection with increasing government employment and increasing government regulation of working hours, an eight-hour-day conception of work is becoming more prevalent. This day stops on Sunday, holidays, and Wednesday afternoon, but it does not vary according to the season or the clemency of the weather. Fewer and fewer crofters are now working after their six o'clock supper, although, during June and July, there is frequently enough light to work all night long. There is a feeling that it is improper for persons to work in the evening. Similarly, there seems to be a tendency to be more and more selfconscious about staying abed all through the morning in wintertime. Winter mornings are coming more and more to be defined as times when it is improper to not be up and around. In other words, the hours between eight in the morning and six at night on weekdays are coming not only to be more and more common as the period when one is working, but this time period is coming more and more to be defined as the time when, and only when, men ought to be engaged in work. Failure to be seen working during this time, or perceived attempts to work during other times, are coming more and more to be felt as something which gives the community a bad name.

Interestingly enough, Wednesday afternoon off, which those who work in the shops or for the government enjoy, is apparently still felt to be a slightly improper luxury; the young clerks who choose to spend that afternoon in visible recreational pursuits seem to do so with feelings of selfconsciousness and even feelings of guilt. So, too, Wednesday night, which has traditionally been a time for socials and festivities—a sort of duplication of what also occurs on Saturday night—does not yet seem to have succumbed to standard Anglo-American definitions of Wednesday night.

It may also be noted that specialized communication services are also influenced by the perception range characteristic of undirected communication in Dixon. If a telegram is delivered to anyone, many persons in the neighborhood can see that this has taken place, and soon the whole community knowns that an important event has occurred in the family to which the message was delivered. Similarly, the shape of packages delivered by the postman can be seen by many persons, although the package itself is not violated. If a package shaped like a bottle of whiskey is delivered to someone, many others soon know that this has occurred.[10] All of these sources of undirected communication contribute to the feeling that many crofters express that Dixon is a fine place but everyone knows too much about everyone else.

[10] For a handful of persons in the community, drinking is thought by others to be a "problem." The chief postman cooperates with the disapproved drinkers by delivering their whiskey packages by car personally, thus eliminating undirected signs conveyed by packages. Of course, this double delivery service is known of, and the appearance of the postman's car outside certain cottages is itself taken as a sign of a whiskey delivery.

# *Chapter IX: Social Occasion*

doi

In Dixon, as, apparently, elsewhere in English-speaking society, the term "social occasion" is often given to events such as a whist-social, a picnic, a public political meeting, etc. When we examine events of this kind, we can isolate a set of common characteristics:

1. Regulations usually exist as to who may and may not participate, and all those participating do so in capacities defined as relevant.
2. The event is felt to have a beginning and an end (even though in some cases it may not be possible to define precisely the moment of beginning or ending) and is felt to be in continuous existence between these points, even though lulls and intermissions may occur. Further, between the beginning and the end of an occasion there is what might be called an involvement contour, a line tracing the gradual initial involvement of the participants in the occasion, the peaks and low points of the involvement of the participants during the occasion, and the path by which the participants come finally to reemerge from their psychological commitment to the activity of the occasion and leave the interaction.
3. Participants recognize that the event involves a "main" or "chief" activity and that this activity takes place in a very small number of bounded regions which are usually connected with one another. Main regions are recognized. In addition, recognition is given to a number of other regions, usually smaller than the main ones, where activity functionally related to the main activity but different from and subordinate to it takes place. Thus, at a whist-social in Dixon, whist is defined as the main activity and the large room in the community hall is defined as the main bounded region; the kitchen, the cloak rooms, and the entrance hallway are recognized as places where related but secondary activity occurs. These regions, whether main or subordinate, are of course the scene of other kinds of social occasions at other times.
4. One or more participants are usually defined as responsible for getting the occasion under way, guiding the main activity, and terminating the event.

Events which may be classified as social occasions themselves vary in certain ways. Some of these dimensions of variations will be suggested here.

1. Social occasions vary according to the degree to which participants recognize that the goal or object of the occasion is realized within the occasion itself.[1] Thus, in Dixon, a political rally may be attended in order to obtain the opinion of the speaker; attendance in such cases is an admitted means to an end, and the end is something that falls outside the meeting itself. A party, on the other hand, is not attended as a means to some end lying outside the party itself; to say that participants go for recreation seems only an attempt to put into an instrumental mode of thinking what really does not belong there. Occasions which are, in a sense, their own and are variously described in the literature as convivial, informal, recreational, or social in nature; the other kind of occasion is sometimes called "serious" or "formal." Obviously a recreational occasion may have small periods within it devoted to serious activity, and serious occasions may have small parts devoted to recreation. Also, we find that persons attend supposedly serious occasions just for the convivial pleasure of being with people and that persons attend supposedly convivial occasions for what we call "ulterior" motives; in both cases, however, the person who attends for improper reasons gives lip service to the socially defined nature of the occasion and acts as if he were attending for proper reasons. For example, during billiards at the Dixon hall, it seemed that at least one steady player, the manager of Allen's Dixon shop, played because he thought it was a good thing for himself and for the business to be represented at the occasion. He admitted privately to me that he really didn't care what kind of a score he was able to build up during a shot and was only concerned to keep the teams as evenly balanced as possible so as to ensure the interest of the players; if he found himself getting more points than his side needed to keep a little ahead, he would "let up" and not really try. What ought to have been an end in itself was for him a means to an end.

Of course, a social occasion that is properly defined as recreational for one person may be defined as serious for another. For example, the job of the caretaker of the community hall during billiard nights was to close the hall at night and see that the lights were kept in working order. The caretaker was supposed to spend the evening among the players but as a worker, not as a player. Interestingly enough, on many occasions he found himself unable to treat the occasion as a means to his livelihood; he continually got caught up in the occasion and found himself wanting to play even though he ought to have been present not as a player but as a worker. In joining

[1] Simmel, of course, makes this point, *op. cit.*, p. 45, where in comparing sociability to play he says: "Inasmuch as in the purity of its manifestations, sociability has no objective purpose, no content, no extrinsic results, it entirely depends on the personalities among whom it occurs. Its aim is nothing but the success of the sociable moment and, at most, a memory of it. Hence the conditions and results of the process of sociability are exclusively the persons who find themselves at a social gathering. Its character is determined by such personal qualities as amiability, refinement, cordiality, and many other sources of attraction." In his lectures Professor Shils has made the same point in reference to primary groups.

the play, the caretaker found it necessary to give constant assurance that he was merely filling in until others came or that he really didn't want to play at all. This effort on the part of the caretaker to stay within his role, and his ability to do so, became a standing joke with the steady players.

A final qualification must be made concerning the recreational-serious polarity. It sometimes seems that some participants obtain enjoyment and spontaneous involvement in an occasion to the degree to which the occasion provides a lowering of social barriers between themselves and persons of relatively high status. A "successful" party in Dixon, as in many other places, is often one in which a person who has previously been distant and superior to those present ceases, at least for the duration of the occasion, to maintain his usual social distance. In this sense, the occasion is a means to an external end. But in these cases, participants who are given this means are not supposed to define it as such or recognize it as such. A social occasion, it seems, can actually function as a means to an external end for a participant, and yet he may sincerely feel that all he gets from the occasion is recreation and enjoyment. The instrumentality of a recreational occasion may be unconscious, and hence the person for whom the occasion is instrumental in this sense need not feign the absence of an ulterior motive.

2. Occasions vary in the degree to which they are organized by means of preestablished explicit directives, giving us on one hand occasions which tend to be what are often called "informally organized," and on the other hand occasions which tend to be "formally organized." Formality-informality, as regards organization, is found in various factors. Three examples may be suggested.

First, a plan of operation may be explicitly specified beforehand, setting out a detailed agenda for the occasion, or, on the other hand, the plan of proceedings may tend to be implicit, with the participants deciding at any one stage in the undertaking what they will do in the next stage. In Dixon, for example, the semi-annual concert is fully programmed, performers knowing beforehand the sequence in which they will appear; family picnics, in contrast, tend to be informally organized and decisions, in contrast, tend to be informally organized and decisions as to what to do at any particular time tend not to be arrived at until it is time to act upon the decision.

Secondarily, some of the participants may be explicitly designated as officers who have the right and obligation to direct proceedings, or, on the other hand, leadership may either be inessential or develop spontaneously as a consequence of interaction during the occasion. For example, during a sheep "cawing," when shareholders in grazing rights to a particular stretch of hill work cooperatively to bring the

sheep together for dipping or shearing, one man is designated to give commands to the herders so that the sheep cannot find a weak point in the closing ring of herders and break for the hills. His word is the authorized signal for beginning or ending each phase in the operation. On the other hand, during billiards no one has the official right to say when the players ought to quit and go home; the decision comes in what looks to be a spontaneous way, although in fact it must usually be informally or implicitly authorized by the "informal" leader.

Thirdly, rights and obligations may tend to be explicitly specified in detail beforehand, with rewards and punishments specified in detail as a means of guiding behavior, or rights, obligations, and sanctions may be taken for granted and not determined explicitly until the moment arrives for exerting them. For example, at billiards, which tends to be informally organized, there is none the less a specific explicit rule that each player place two pence in an "expenses" box for each game played; at most parties in the community, no explicit duties are placed upon guests.

3. Social occasions appear to vary in the degree to which they are conducted in what has come to be thought of as a formal or an informal way. In occasions which are formally conducted, participants are obliged to restrict their activity to roles that are explicitly or implicitly defined as the main and proper ones for the occasion. In occasions which are informally conducted, participants are allowed to interact in capacities other than those defined as relevant for the occasion. Thus, in Dixon, at birthday parties, participants are fairly strongly obliged to stay within the ethos of a party and not separate themselves off, individually or in small clusters, for activity in whose spirit all participants cannot share. On the other hand, when a few friends "drop in," without special reason, the occasion tends to be informal, participants moving in and out of their role as party guests, as interest at the moment dictates.

Observations in Dixon suggest that the degree to which a given occasion is serious or convivial cannot tell us the degree to which it will be formally or informally organized, and that neither of these factors can tell us whether it will tend to be formally or informally conducted. Hence it seems useful to distinguish among the three variables, although all pertain in some way to the commonsense notion of formality-informality, a notion that has been used with little further refinement in much sociological literature.

4. Social occasions may vary according to the number of different lines of action which are defined as the main activity of the occasion. For example, in Dixon during the natural "Gala Day," several competitive sports events (such as the running broad jump, the hundred

yard dash) and several farm competitions (such as produce judging and sheep dog trials) may be defined as main activities and be in progress at adjacent places at the same time. On the other hand, the evening ceremony, during which the prizes are awarded, is part of the Gala Day's stage performance which allows for only one main activity at a time.

5. Social occasions vary according to the degree to which persons look forward to them as coming concrete entities and/or look back at them, after they are past, as things to be separated out from the flow of events in which they are embedded and seen as independent units. Regardless of what occurs at an occasion, persons tend to think of some as distinct entities and of other occasions as not. For example, an employee may know that he will be at work all day in a given place two weeks from a given moment, but he will not single out this attendance at work, or, rather, the occasion which he thereby attends, and think of it as a distinct and special thing; it will be just another work day. On the other hand, the day at work which is given over to the Christmas party may for him constitute a special occasion, to which he looks forward and to which he looks back. A party which was begun on the spur of the moment may be an occasion to which no one looked forward but to which all participants look back.

6. Social occasions seem to vary according to the degree to which they constitute "regular" occasions and form part of a series of occasions. A regular occasion is often thought of as one which occurs at the same place, at the same point in a daily, weekly, or annual time cycle, and with the same participants, as the other occasions in the series. For example, in Dixon the social occasion provided by the accidental burning down of a shop does not recur in any periodic sense; the twice-monthly showing of the rural film unit does form part of a series of recurrent showings. Recurrent or regular occasions the smiles seem to differ in subtle ways. Some series of occasions are recognized as a series; the series is looked forward to and back upon as a series, and behavior at one regular occasion may have some explicit or implicit carryover and consequence for a later similar occasion. We sometimes use the term "sessions" to refer to a series of this kind. In Dixon, there is an annual sailing boat competition that awards a cup to the boat that makes the best total score in a series of about eight races. Each race is held on Saturday night during eight successive weeks. The eight races and the eight Saturday nights are felt in certain ways to be a single unit. On the other hand, daily dinner in a Dixon household involves the same participants in the same activity at the same place, but little social recognition seems to be given to the series as a series.

In the research reported in this study, social occasions and series of occasions were not, as such, the focus of attention. The concept of social occasion has been considered because it is helpful to give some attention to what one is not, specifically, studying in order to speak more clearly about what one is studying. Furthermore, it will now be possible to talk about the context or setting in which social interaction occurs in terms that are not completely undefined. It should be noted, however, that no attempt has been made to consider other kinds of contexts which provide a setting for interaction, such as diffuse definitions of the situation that prevail in a given place and time and that lead us to feel that certain interaction is appropriate on Saturday night downtown that is not appropriate Tuesday afternoon in the factory, and that permissible behavior on New Year's Eve may everywhere be a little different from what is considered permissible at other times.

# *Chapter X: Accredited Participation and Interplay*

doi

When two or more persons are engaged in linguistic communication with one another, in Dixon and apparently elsewhere in Western society, there is a tendency for each participant to extend to himself and to all other participants the like privilege of "accredited" attendance. Briefly, each person not only participates in the interaction but does so, and is allowed to do so, with legitimacy; his manner conveys that he is openly and admittedly involved in the conversation and that his presence in the conversation is a proper and justifiable thing.

Accredited or legitimated attendance may be thought of as a kind of status. It is perhaps one of the broadest of statuses; persons of extremely discrepant social position can find themselves in a situation where it is fitting to impute it to one another. The status carries the right and the obligation to receive the message at hand, and the status implies the judgment that the participant is worthy and capable of receiving the message. It should be noted that incumbents of the status are obliged to be engaged at that very moment in exercising their status and that the status does not carry over from one period when it is being exercised to another period, as, for example, in the case of occupational statuses. There is no interspersing of times during which the status is exercised with times during which it is latent.

Additional communication statuses may be imposed on participants in an unequal and differential way. For example, only certain participants among those present may be allowed to send linguistic messages as well as receive them. These limitations on one's rights as sender nevertheless do not alter the fact of an underlying like status of accredited participation which all participants equally enjoy.

While a person may have only the right to receive a linguistic message, and not the right to send one, and still be an accredited participant, it must be made quite clear that mere reception of the message in question does not necessarily imply recognition as a legitimate participant. A person may overhear a conversation without the conversers knowing that this is the case.[1] Further, a person who is known by the participants to be in a position to audit their conver-

[1] This kind of communication arrangement was considered in chap. vi.

sation may be given the status of a "non-person" and treated from the point of view of the conversation as if he were not present and therefore as if certain kinds of consideration need not be given to him."[2]

Reference has been made, in the chapter on indelicate communication arrangements, to some obvious kinds of reception and participation that are socially unrecognized or unaccredited. The difference between accredited participants and unaccredited participants can be much more subtle than was suggested there. A person can overhear a conversation and know that the accredited participants know he is overhearing the conversation—and yet not be a legitimate participant. This may occur whether or not the conversers make an effort to feign that they are not aware that they are being overheard. Further, the conversers may convey by their manner to the eavesdropper that they realize that he is overhearing them, while at the same time the eavesdropper may convey back to them that eh knows they know he is overhearing them—and still the intruder need not be taken into the conversational circle as an accredited participant. In all of these marginal types of communication, we may have an exchange of action and reaction between accredited participants and the intruder, and yet this by-play is not part of conversational interaction in the strict sense of the term.[3]

It seems that among the accredited participants of a given spate of linguistic communication, one participant is usually given the role of accredited sender and the remaining participants are accorded the role of accredited recipients. The thoughts of all the participants are usually brought to bear on a particular subject-matter of reference, while at the same time the recipients focus their visual attention on the sender for the duration of his message.[4] Accredited recipients have the obligation of granting their attention to the sender and the right to expect him to convey a meaningful, acceptable message; the accredited sender has the right of receiving the concerted attention of the other participants and the obligation to fulfill their expectation that a meaningful, acceptable message will be forthcoming.

When a number of persons recognize one another as accredited participants, turning their minds to the same subject-matter and their eyes to the same speaker, a shared definition of the situation apparently comes to prevail. A shared understanding arises as to what judgments are to be openly stated concerning the topic under consideration, and a working acceptance or surface consensus is achieved concerning the complex social valuation that is to be provisionally accorded each participant. A mental set is established and particular attitudes are encouraged. A culture, a climate of opinion, a group atmosphere tend to arise.[5]

[2] This kind of communication arrangement is considered in chap. xvi.

[3] Students of social interaction have sometimes confused the issue by attempting to study a limited type of interactive system, namely conversation, by means of very abstract criteria, e.g., the action of two persons when each knows he is under observation by the other. Abstract criteria such as this are equally satisfied by a whole range of interesting but minor communication arrangements. The crucial criterion of *accredited* participation seems to have been consistently overlooked. The presence of this factor would seem to serve as a means of isolating a natural area for sociological study.

[4] Cf. R. F. Bales and others, "Channels of Communication in Small Group Interaction," *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, XVI (461–468), 461. "The conversation generally proceeded so that one person talked at a time, and all members in the particular group were attending the same conversation. In this sense, these groups might be said to have a 'single focus,' that is, they did not involve a number of conversations proceeding at the same time, as one finds at a cocktail party or in a hotel lobby. The single focus is probably a limiting condition of fundamental importance in the generalizations reported here."

It is possible, presumably, for the thoughts and visual attention of recipients to come together into a focus in order to receive a single message from a speaker, and then for this common orientation to break down completely once the message has been received. Apparently, however, when a number of individuals join one another in a state of mutually accredited participation, there is a tendency for the social-psychological alignment of the participants to remain intact even though a sender's message has been terminated and even though there may have been a shift in the spatial position of the participants and fluctuation (within limits) in the number of accredited participants. As one participant ceases to play the role of sender and falls back into being merely a recipient, another participant takes on the role of sender. The definition of the situation that provided the context for one message is maintained and provides a context for the next message. The focus of visual attention in a sense is also maintained, for while it passes from one speaker to another, it tends to pass to a single speaker. We may refer to the total communication which occurs on the part of accredited participants during the time that they are aligned together in one definition of the situation and one focus of visual attention as an interplay.[6] The persons who maintain a particular interplay are not thereby a group; they have merely extended to one another a certain kind of temporary communication status.

An interplay may last for a moment, as in the case of strangers who are forced to pass each other on a narrow walk and who glance at each other in order to make sure that difficulties or misunderstandings will not arise. An interplay may last hours, as in the case of organized debates. An interplay may include only two participants (no doubt the most common arrangement); it may include many participants, e.g., a mass meeting. A particular social occasion is usually the scene for more than one interplay at any given moment, but this is not necessarily the case; some social occasions encompass or incorporate only one interplay. Finally, it is often convenient to characterize an interplay by the character of the social occasion in which the interplay occurs.

The statement has been made that participants in an interplay focus their thoughts on the same subject-matter and direct their visual attention to a single speaker, although this attention may pass from one speaker to another. Some qualifications of this statement must be suggested.

1. The focus of attention in an interplay may momentarily pass to objects which can serve in this capacity but in no other relevant one. During informal conversation, for example, the focus of attention may momentarily pass to infants, or animal pets, or even to cultural artificers.

[5] A statement of this is provided by Gregory Bateson in his discussion of ethos in *Naven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. 119–120. "When a group of young intellectual English men or women are talking and joking together wittily and with a touch of light cynicism, there is established among them for the time being a definite tone of appropriate behavior. Such specific tones of behavior are in all cases indicative of an ethos. They are expressions of a standardised system of emotional attitudes. In this case the men have temporarily adopted a definite set of sentiments toward the rest of the world, a definite attitude toward reality, and they will joke about subjects which at another time they would treat with seriousness. If one of the men suddenly intrudes a sincere or realist remark it will be received with no enthusiasm—perhaps with a moment's silence and a slight feeling that the sincere person has committed a solecism. On another occasion the same group of persons may adopt a different ethos; they may talk realistically and sincerely. Then if the blunderer makes a flippant joke it will fall flat and feel like a solecism."

[6] It would be less troublesome to use the term "a conversation" instead of the term "an interplay." However, certain interplays, as for example political speeches, can hardly be called "conversations."

2. A group of persons may play together the role of a single affective sender. Choral singing at a church social provides an example.

3. A participant may attempt, sometimes successfully, to take over the focus of attention before the currently recognized sender is ready to relinquish his role. In addition to the phenomenon of interruption, we also find the phenomenon of "heckling," that is, the practice of capturing the focus of attention for a brief moment in an unrecognized way, so that the recognized sender does not officially terminate his message and is obliged to act as if the focus of attention has not really left him. And we find, especially during large formally-organized occasions, that a knot or cluster of participants may furtively engage in an informal interplay of their own while ostensibly involved in the formally organized one.[7] In all of these disruptive acts, however, the disruptive sign-impulse is modulated so as to allow in some way for the dominance and effective transmission of the accredited message. In Dixon, for example, the only observed exception to the rule that unaccredited messages ought to be modulated in favor of the accredited message occurred in the case of a sixty-five year old man, an orator of wide repute in the community. In his cottage, within his family circle (and only there), he would interrupt a conversation with a request for the focus of attention and then launch into a long statement, whether or not his request for attention was granted. His family developed a rare tolerance for hearing the full sound of two conversations while being engaged in only one.

[7] This communication arrangement is considered in chap. xvii.

The meaning and significance of interruption will, of course, vary. In formally organized interplays explicit and specific sanctions may exist for curbing interruption. In court trials, for example, we have contempt of court actions. Simmel has referred to the practice in some medieval guilds of imposing a fine upon those who interrupted an alderman in his speech.[8] Miller, in considering what happens when persons come to be on increasingly informal terms, suggests that a record of their speech would show changes in rules regarding interruption:

> Such a record of the timing of their conversation will show that at first they are quite polite. Neither interrupts, both wait for the other to finish. As they get to know each other, the rate of interaction increases and interruptions become more frequent. The proportion of the time that each person spends talking usually settles down after several interviews to a relatively constant value.[9]

[8] Simmel, *op. cit.*, ftn. p. 349. It has been said that in Nazi Germany persons in a cafeteria or other semi-public place would be fined if they did not stop their conversation when the voice of Hitler came over the radio loudspeaker. This is a case of legal sanctions being imposed on the interruption of mass-impression messages and is no doubt rare.

[9] George A. Miller, *Language and Communication* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), p. 254.

None the less, if interruption becomes too frequent and both sender and receiver talk at the same time, the interplay usually becomes disorganized.

4. It has been suggested that interruptions may occur but that some limitation will exist concerning them. As a fourth qualification to the original definition of interplay, another basic possibility must be mentioned. When one sender terminates his message, it may happen that no other participant immediately volunteers to take on the role of sender and contribute a messages. A lull may occur and yet the interplay may not, sociologically speaking, have ended. In general, brief lulls are permissible between messages, and somewhat less brief lulls are permissible between interchanges. A lull of some kind, for example, is often required in order to give recipients a chance to consider the message they have received and prepare a response to it. But if a lull occurs that is too long, relative to the norms of the interplay, interactional disorder and feelings of shame and uneasiness may result.[10]

5. During the time that persons are accredited coparticipants, the attention of one or more participants may wander momentarily from the sender. Some of the ways in which this can occur are considered later. Here it must be noted that different kinds of interplay have different standards of tolerance regarding this threat of interaction. Interaction in Dixon tended to confirm the commonsense notion that where an interplay is small, containing two or three persons, rules seem to be strict regarding withdrawal of attention, and where an interplay is large, as in the case of formally organized community socials, greater leeway seems to be accorded to individual participants in momentarily withdrawing attention from the accredited sender. The commonsense explanation for this seems to be valid: if the disaffection of one participant is likely to destroy the interplay (as in the case of two-person interplays or in the case of multi-person formal interplays where the recognized sender withdraws his own attention) then it is strongly tabooed; if it is not likely to destroy the interplay then withdrawal is only mildly disapproved.

6. There are times when the definition of the situation established in an interplay may evolve, develop, or shift rather markedly, so that it becomes reasonable to ask whether or not two different interplays have not been grafted onto each other, the same set of participants and the same focus of attention serving one interplay up to one moment and another interplay afterwards. One often finds, however, that when one participant "changes the topic" completely, and has not done so to save the situation from even graver tensions, then his insensitivity to the prevailing mood and topic is felt to be somewhat improper. Those who do want to change the tone or topic frequently feel obliged to effect a smooth transition by means of messages that meaningfully link the interplay as it was up until then with the interplay as it will become under the direction of the individual initiating the transition.

[10] American broadcasting has contributed the term "dead air" to refer to situations where listeners have, in a sense, given a station their accredited attention and then found that sound suddenly ceases. Apparently stations operate on very slender norms of toleration for dead air. A consideration of the silences during conversation, from the psychological point of view, is given in J. A. M. Meerloo, *Conversation and Communication* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952d), pp. 114–119. The role of silence in the psychoanalytical interview is illuminated by Edmund Berger in his article, "On the Resistance Situation: the Patient Is Silent," *Psychoanalytic Review*, XXV, 170–186.

7. Sometimes interplays of more than two persons may involve differential recipient roles. If a sender has more than one recipient, he may address his message to all of them together as a unit. In public speaking this possibility is frequently an obligation, and speakers work out devices for giving their hearers the impression that they are all equally included. The sender may, on the other hand, address his message to only one or two of his recipients, on the assumption that the unaddressed recipients are none the less recognized as participants. This communication arrangement is typical in small informal interplays. In discussing the question, Bales has used the term "target" to refer to the addressed recipient.[11] The addressed recipient is usually given the visual attention of the sender, this act providing both symbol and source of preferential recipient status.[12]

8. Recipients may enjoy many different kinds of clearly defined privilege with respect to assuming the role of sender. In some interplays, the addressed recipient may be accorded more right to take over the role of sender than is accorded to the unaddressed recipients. As previously suggested, in some interplays, certain categories of recognized recipients may not be given the right to become senders. In formally organized meetings, for example, one category of participant may have the right to raise questions during the formal discussion, another category may have the lesser right to raise questions only after the formal discussion has ended, and a third category may have no right in this respect at any time. Similarly, children at the dinner table are sometimes allowed to listen but forbidden to talk;[13] if not forbidden to talk, they be "helped out" and in this way not permitted to finish a sentence by themselves.[14]

Differential sending status is often expressed in terms of restrictions placed upon the kind of message that can be sent. At public meetings, for example, the audience may be restricted to sending the kind of message that can be conveyed by upward or downward modulation of terminal applause. During certain interplays, one category of sender may only be allowed to say, "Yes, sir," or, "No, sir."

9. If a sender addresses his message to some recipients and not to others, his unaddressed recipients may shift the focus of their attention so that it falls, in part, upon the addressed recipients as well as upon the sender. An extreme example of this occurs in the case of activities involving by-play between two performers that are staged in front of an audience. In such cases, the audience may tend to focus its attention on an interplay of staged messages instead of upon a single message.

[11] Bales and others, "Channels of Communication in Small Group Interaction," p. 462.

[12] By definition, of course there can be no one with unaddressed status in two-person interplays. Miller (*Language and Communication*, p. 251), in making a similar distinction between addressed and unaddressed recipients, suggests that telephone conversations necessarily provide for no unaddressed recipients. Miller's illustration fails to distinguish between unaddressed recipients each of which the sender knows is present and unaddressed recipients who the sender does not know are present.

[13] J. H. S. Bossard, "Family Modes of Expression," *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, X (226–237), 229.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

# *Chapter XI: Expression During Interplay*

doi

In an earlier part of this study, it was suggested that communication, seen as a physical process, provides many events that are well adapted to serve as expressions, witting or unwitting, especially expressions of the evaluative judgment that participants make of one another. As one type of communication arrangement, an interplay provides many vehicles for carrying information about the judgments participants make of one another. Of course, an event which is well designed to express such evaluations may not come to act in this way, and an event which does come to be expressive in this way may not be employed by anyone as a source of information. Furthermore, a vehicle which commonly carries information of one kind in one culture may carry a different meaning in another culture. In this chapter some of the frequent sources of expression in interplay will be considered.

1. One source of expression during interplay is to be found in the manner in which recipients attend to the sender. Chesterfield's view of this matter is interesting:

> There is nothing so brutally shocking, nor so little forgiven, as a seeming inattention to the person who is speaking to you; and I have known many a man knocked down for (in my opinion) a much slighter provocation than that shocking inattention which I mean. I have seen many people who, while you are speaking to them, instead of looking at, and attending to you, fix their eyes upon the ceiling, or some other part of the room, look out of the window, play with a dog, twirl their snuff-box, or pick their nose. Nothing discovers a little, futile, frivolous mind more than this, and nothing is so offensively ill-bred; it is an explicit declaration on your part that every, the most trifling, object deserves your attention more than all that can be said by the person who is speaking to you. Judge of the sentiments of hatred and resentment which such treatment must excite in every breast where any degree of self-love dwells, and I am sure I never yet met with that breast where there was not a great deal. I repeat it again and again (for it is highly necessary for you to remember it) that sort of vanity and self-love is inseparable from human nature, whatever may be its rank or condition; even your footman will sinner forget and forgive a beating, than any

> manifest mark of slight and contempt. Be therefore, I beg of you, not only really, but seemingly and manifestly, attentive to whoever speaks to you; nay more, take their tone, and tune yourself to their unison. Be serious with the serious, gay with the gay, and trifle with the triplets. In assuming these various shapes, ends our to make each of them seem to sit easy upon you, and even to appear to be your own natural one. This is true and useful versatility, of which a thorough knowledge of the world at once teaches the utility, and the means of acquiring.[1]

[1] *Letters of Lord Chesterfield to His Son*, pp. 261–262.

2. In the literature, some attention has been given to the fact that lulls in conversation or frequent interruptions express something significant about the relation of the participants. Chapple and Coon have suggested that:

> The degree of adjustments between two individuals may be measured in terms of the amount of synchronization between their action and silences. When two persons are able to interact, within the normal limits of their interaction rates, in such a way that they do not interrupt each other frequently and that neither fails to respond when the other stops talking, they are well adjusted, . . . the disturbing effects of interruptions and failures to respond produce changes in the sympathetic nervous system which the physiologists describe as pain, fear, and range.[2]

[2] E. D. Chapple and C. S. Coon, *Principles of Anthropology* (New York: Holt, 1942), p. 39

And a clinical study by Chapple and Lindemann shows that "double action" and double silence occur very little among normals but much more frequently among the disordered.[3] In the case of improper lulls in the interaction, it is to be noted that the impression made by lulls on those who must experience them varies a great deal from one type of interplay to another. In Dixon, in formally organized interplays such as those occurring during a concert, lulls created by the failure of one performer to follow another rapidly enough, or the lull caused by the failure of volunteer musicians to appear at the time dancing was to have begun, caused some disorder and strain, but on the whole such lulls were taken in stride as an expression of the incompetence of those who had been chosen to run the concert. On the other hand, lulls which occurred during informal "ad hoc" interplay seemed to be a more serious thing; they tended to be taken as an expression of the fact that the participants had too little "in common" to justify informal social intercourse.

[3] E. D. Chapple, and E. Lindemann, "Clinical Implications of Interaction Rates in Psychiatric Interviews," *Human Organization*, I, 111

3. Of the many different sources of expression in interplay, students of interaction seem to have given most consideration to forms of what might be referred to as "attention quota," that is, the relative amount of time during which a given participant acts as a sender, or the relative number of messages he sends. Chapple and Coon have suggested that each person has a demand level for attention which is peculiar to him and which he tries to establish in all of his interplays.[4] One student, in discussing the casual coming together

[4] Chapple and Coon, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

of persons in brief conversation, says, "Our earlier experience had indicated a very strong relationship between decision-winning or leadership and talking-time in ad hoc groups for four persons."[5] Another student has reported a correlation of .93 between the time a participant in an eight-man "group" spent talking and the votes he received from observers for having demonstrated leadership.[6]

Students interested in the expressive significance of attention quota have quite frequently employed this factor as an index of a rather complex variable, namely, "informal status within the group."[7] The drawback of this approach is that often participants also realize that attention quota is a significant expression and attempt to increase or decrease the number or length of the messages they send, in an effort to control the impression that they feel their actions give. Perhaps a less famous expression of rank within the interplay, such as the quote of time or times during which a given participant is the addressed recipient, would provide a more reliable index.[8]

In any case, it is convenient to think of the granting of attention as a kind of indulgence, for in this way we can better appreciate that esteem for the sender is merely one of the reasons we might have for granting him our attention.

In Dixon, the use of attention quote as a general measure of informal leadership or esteem was grossly inadequate in certain contexts. Three of these may be mentioned.

First, the occurrence of something special to a particular participant—a birthday, a minor accident, an achievement, etc.—tended for a time to place the participant in the focus of attention and make him the central object of reference. (Of course, it may well have been that the lower a participant's usual position, the more drastic must be the special event that enables him to monopolize attention.)

Secondly, persons who were too far removed from the commoners to find a place within their ranking structure were frequently accorded long period of ungrudging attention. Small children, strangers, gentry, kittens, chronic misbehaviors—all these qualified for attention indulgence. This patter of treatment, incidentally, seemed also to be extended sometimes to persons who "ought to have known better," but who none the less attempted to obtain more attention than was fitting for them. On such occasions the offender was led into taking even more attention than he may have wanted, for which unknowingly paid the price of being classified along with children, cats, and strangers.

Thirdly, during formally organized recreation, persons frequently seemed to act in capacities which they did not judge as important and hence seemed not much concerned over the allocation of attention at these times. Thus, at the semi-annual concerts, the esteem in

[5] F. L. Strodbeck. "Husband and Wife Interaction," *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, XVI (468–473), 469.

[6] B. M. Bass, "An Analysis of Leaderless Group Discussion," *J. of Applied Psych.*, XXXIII, 527–533, especially pp. 531–532.

[7] Leon Festinger and John Thibaut, "Interpersonal Communication in Small Groups," *Theory and Experiment in Social Communication*, by Leon Festinger and Others (Ann Arbor: Edwards Bros., 1952), pp. 37–49, especially p. 44, claim to have shown that a large volume of communication may be directed to and originate from a participant who violently disagrees with other participants. Attention quota in such cases would probably not be an index of "status" in the interplay. Bales, "The Equilibrium Problem in Small Groups," *Working Papers in the Theory of Action*, by Talcott Parsons, Robert F. Bales, and Edward A. Shils (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953), p. 131, cogently argues that the supposition that high attention quota is related to status is at least a good working assumption, for it causes us to examine critically any deviation from this rule.

[8] There are, of course, many other expressions of differential evaluation within an interplay, some of these stressing the rank of the participant within the interplay and some stressing more the rank of the participant in the wider social world. For example, when two participants attempt to reply at the same time to a sender's message, the participant who is the more highly esteemed of the two is often according the right to proceed. Sometimes, of course, this introduces an untactful show of superiority, and an attempt may be made to resolve the sign tension by allowing the first of the respondents to have the floor. In Dixon, when two persons start to answer a third and appear to have started at exactly the same time, a brief moment of disorganization follows, often terminated in laughter.

which a particular performer was held in the community at large (as a person, not as a performer) did not seem to influence very much the willingness of the audience to accord the performer her attention. In fact, games such as whist or "beetle" formally incorporated the right for each participant to have either equal attention indulgence or an equal chance of receiving a large amount of this indulgence.

When the above mentioned qualifications were not operative, attention time tended to be an indulgence in Dixon, and an indulgence that persons were felt to deserve according to their rank in the interplay. It seemed, however, that in addition to the relative factor an absolute one was operative. In two-person interplay, no cases were observed where the subordinate did not have the right to convey some messages. The statement-reply nature of communication would itself have operated in this direction. As the number of participants increased, however, the number of messages thought proper for a particular participant seemed to decrease more than proportionately. The indulgence involved in receiving the attention of more than three or four persons seemed to be considered so great a thing that more than a moment of it was frequently thought to be a presumption on the part of the person who obtained. A point seems to be reached where even those of high status in the interplay feel that it is presumptuous or dangerous for them to accept the focus of attention for more than a moment.[9] Perhaps this may help us to account for the fact that has been widely cited in the literature, namely, that informal interplays of more than five persons tend to be unstable and tend to suffer a cleavage into two or more small interplays.[10] Perhaps this may also help to throw light on some of the social functions of organizing some interplays in a formal way, suggesting that a formally selected sender acting in a formally designated and limited capacity does not have to rely on his own personality and general status as a warrant for the attention he receives and can therefore accept with impunity the attention of many persons.

During informal interplay in Dixon, when the sender in one small conversational cluster suddenly received the attention of members of a neighboring cluster, embarrassment frequently resulted and the sender frequently terminated his message in a rapid and somewhat disorganized way. With one class of exceptions, only one instance was observed where a talker was willing to accept the attention of a relatively larger number of listeners for more than a few seconds. At a dinner party of twenty-five, a man made a comment to his neighbors on the political situation, and after answering a question raised by a person at the other end of the table went on to air his views to the whole room. However, he was a man famous in the community for playing communication tricks; he seemed to have sensed, on this

[9] Apparently one solution for this problem is for a sender rigorously to direct his message to a particular participant, often the informal leader, as a means both of obtaining extra legitimacy for his demands and at the same time providing a simulation of a two-person interplay.

[10] See, for example, John James, "A Preliminary Study of the Size Determinant in Small Group Interaction," *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, XVI, 474–477, especially p. 476.

occasion, that many listeners felt embarrassed, but he talked to the whole table in spite of it.

The class of exceptions observed regarding size limitation on informal interplay pertains to the institution of "story telling" which is found in Bergand and a few other Britain's islands. When from about six to about fifteen men gather in a room, a person reknowned [*sic*] as a story teller may be persuaded to settle back and tell a tale. Tales usually have to do with more heroic days, when sailing vessels were still employed and when the harbor in Dixon was filled with crafts. The story tellers seemed to be able to handle the attention they received with exquisite poise and balance, injecting enough personal involvement and reference to keep attention alive, and yet doing this in such a way that the indulgence of the listeners was transferred from the story teller to the past about which he was talking. In Dixon, the idea that there might be a communication arrangement half way between informal interplay on one hand and formally organized interplay on the other seemed to be dying, and only a few old men still seemed to appreciate that the institution of story telling required a special skill and manner and involved a special communication license with respect to attention indulgence.

4. One source of expression in interplay is to be found in a person's entrance into or initiation of an interplay and in his manner of leaving or terminating it.[11] An illustration may be taken from an early American etiquette book, where conduct with respect to conversational clusters at parties is considered:

> If a lady and gentleman are conversing together at an evening party, it would be a rudeness for another person to go up and interrupt them by introductions a new topic of conversation. If you are sure that there is nothing of a particular and private interest passing between them, you may *join* their conversation and strike into the current of their remarks; yet if you then find that they are so much engaged and entertained by the discussion that they were holding together, as to render the termination or the change of its character unwelcome, you should withdraw. If, however, two persons are occupied with one another upon what you guess to be terms peculiarly delicate and particular, you should entirely withhold yourself from their company. If you are talking to a lady with the ordinary indifference of a common acquaintance, and are only waiting till some one else comes up, for an opportunity to leave her, you should not move the instant another reminds, for that would look as if your previous tarrying had been compulsory, but you should remain a few moments and then turn away.[12]

It is to be noted that participation status in an interplay involves important rights and obligations. In general, accredited status in the same interplay puts persons in an extremely good position to convey linguistic and expressive information to one another. In a sense,

[11] There are analogous rules for guiding initiation and entrance, withdrawal and termination in the case of social occasions. For example, in some social circles in our society it is felt that early leavetaking is a possible affront to those remaining, and there is a formalized rule that no one may leave until the highest-ranking person makes a visible move to do so. In other circles in our society, it is understood that the more intimate the relationship between a particular guest at a party and his host, the longer it is proper for him to stay, and that guests on more distance terms with the host ought to leave in time to give more intimately related guests an opportunity of being alone with the host.

[12] *The Canons of Good Breeding: or the Handbook of the Man of Fashion* (Philadelphia: Lee and Blanchard, 1839), pp. 68–69.

shared status of this kind opens persons up to one another. We can therefore appreciate why persons are usually interested in seeking or avoiding accredited participation with specific other persons. Perhaps, therefore, we can also understand why it is that any alternation in the likelihood or probability of two persons entering into interplay with one another tends to be marked by ceremony of some kind.

It is to be noted, further, that persons who enter into interplay with each other tend to show more accommodative consideration of one another than they would have been had they not entered together into the interplay.[13] This fact seems to be especially true of sender and recipient.[14]

Since joint participation makes persons available to each other it is not surprising that we find that rules exist for determining who may break into conversational interplay with whom, and under what circumstances this may be done. In general, in our society, it seems that we have a right to bring a person into interplay or a right to enter an interplay that is already in progress to the degree that our action cannot be construed as an effort to reduce social distance or improperly acquire strategic information. If the interplay is patently going to be brief, then strangers can accost each other, as when one persons asks another for directions, or a match, or the time. If visible proof is not available that the interplay will not involve participants in entangling alliances, then, at least in our cities, strangers do not quite have the right to engage each other in conversation. It may be noted that the institution of "introduction" in our society establishes between persons, in many cases, the right and the obligations of entering into interplay with each other whenever this becomes a physical possibility, even if the possibility is quite unexpected. It may also be noted that certain social occasions in our society, such as informal social parties, give all those present, by virtue of their presence, the right to enter or be called into any interplay in progress or to initiate interplay with anyone present.

In Dixon, as in many other rural regions in Western society, all adults of like sex have the right and obligation of momentarily entering into interplay with each other when passing on the road or field.[15] These interplays are required to be positively toned and accommodative. A difficulty frequently arose, therefore, between persons who are antagonistic to one another. To enter into interaction with an enemy tended to call forth more accommodation than one wanted. To refuse to enter into interaction when obviously in a position to do so tended to signify too great an insult.[16] Hence, between gentry and crofter, and between crofters who had "fallen out" with each other, avoidance relationships were sometimes practised as a solution to the problem. Persons hostile to one another tended to avoid

[13] Knowledge of this fact is exploited by "stemmers" or street salesmen who force persons into conversational interaction without waiting for a justifiable or proper pretext for doing so. The stemmer then phrases his salestalk or "pitch" in such a way that the potential customer must open contradict the salesman if a sale is to be avoided. In order not to have to contradict someone "to his face" and in order to terminate what is in any case an improper interplay, potential customers frequently agree to the sale.

[14] Since a sender need be more careful, ritually speaking, of an addressed recipient than an unaddressed recipient, senders sometimes attempt to convey a remark for which there are unaddressed recipients, or even persons who are forced into the role of effectively excluded overhearers, but for which there is pointedly no addressed recipient. We sometimes call this communication arrangement "talking into the air." On the island, when an individual wished to expression an opinion which eh could not quite bring himself to convey to an addressed recipient, he would sometimes address his remark to the kitchen cat, or to a small child, or "into the air" in a ruminative, editorializing and inwardly directed spirit. Similarly, on the island as elsewhere in Wester society, a closely related pair of persons, such as husband and wife, will sometimes wait for the presence of a third person before voicing criticism or approval of the other member of the pair. A third person can be used as an addressed recipient and be told things that the talked-about member of the pair can accept as an unaddressed recipient but not as an addressed recipient. The presence of this kind of leeway is one of the factors which distinguishes three-person interplay from two-person interplay.

[15] The few exceptions to this rule are considered later in another context.

each other's eyes if possible and not to frequent the same place at the same time.

Once persons have entered together into interplay, termination of the interplay commonly becomes a delicate matter. If one participant withdraws before the others do, this act is often taken, justifiably or not, as an expression of the departed one's attitude to those remaining. This possibility causes some persons to be leary about initiating interplays which they do not have a ready means for terminating. In official circles, where highly sacred participants must be protected, termination of an interplay (and a social occasion) is signaled by the leavetaking of the highest-ranking participant, others not leaving until that participant does.

The eventual necessity for every interplay to terminate constitutes a sign situation; whether or not participants desire it, something will probably be taken to have been expressed. There are several standard strategies for resolving this sign dilemma.

First, allowances are made for clearcut extenuating circumstances. Thus, on the island, a housewife whose soup boiled over could rely on the noise and smell to make good her leavetaking and could be sure that her hasty departure would be tolerated. Messages bearing painful tidings could also be relied upon as a sufficient pretext to leave a conversation or an occasion.

Secondly, the leavetaker may strongly confirm to the participants that the self that is leaving is not, in a sense, the self that the leavetaker thinks most highly of. By apologizing profusely, or by offering an excuse which clearly puts him on the side of those remaining and in opposition to the obligation that calls him away, or by joking to suggest that the self that is hurrying away is not a serious self, the leavetaker can leave tactfully.

It is interesting to note that informal interplay is frequently terminated, or at least that the termination is frequently confirmed, by the participants moving away from one another. In Dixon an interesting difficulty arose in this connection. When two persons met in a field and engaged for a moment in informal interplay, they would attempt to close out the interplay with the usual signals, such as "good day," and the like. This was satisfactory as long as the two persons happened to be going in different directions. But if their paths diverged only slightly from a single point, separation could only be gradually effected. In such cases, the persons found themselves still close to one another even though official good-byes had been made. Frequently the difficulty seemed to be resolved by one participant either breaking into a run as soon as paths started to diverge, perhaps offering an excuse for doing so, or by one or both participants taking a path that involved more clearcut divergence.[17]

[16] This is what is known as a "cut." One gets the impression that this communication arrangement is less frequently employed today than in previous periods. We avoid interaction by avoiding persons' eyes, but we seem to be inclined to allow the person whose eyes have been avoided to retain the belief that he has been accidentally overlooked.

Thirdly, the withdrawing participant may stat as long as possible in order to show that he is genuinely involved in the interaction. Thus, during billiards, almost all the players followed the practice of not leaving the hall immediately on completion of the game they were playing in but rather waited out a few minutes of the next game, which did not involve them as players. This was a final gesture that the evening's play as such, and not merely their own turn, had involved them. This kind of tactful delicacy was very common in Dixon.

As a final note on termination of interplay, it is to be suggested that a very common strategy for ending an interplay is for all parties to withdraw simultaneously. This seems to be accomplished by an exchange of very minimal cues among the participants so that each becomes areas that the conversation is about to be terminated and makes necessary allowances. No one in such cases is left holding the interplay. On the island, this kind of natural termination frequently occurred, especially where the participants had been together before at occasions of similar interplays and when some feeling of solidarity and mutual approval existed.[18]

In the hotel kitchen natural termination of mealtime interplay became linked with feelings of work control and self-respect on the part of the employees. After a meal, everyone would linger for a time over teat and cigarettes, talking, and allowing a margin of time to elapse, even during the busiest days, between when the meal was technically finished and when it was sociologically finished. The managers, who wanted the employees to return to work as soon as possible, often felt uneasy about waiting for natural termination and tried to hurry up the ending. Mr. Tate was often untactful in these matters and would withdraw psychologically from the interplay and, in a changed tone of voice, tell the employees that there was much work to be done. On many occasions this command was openly overlooked (often, apparently, unconsciously) and the participants would have an extra cup of tea, or bring a chair that had been removed from the table when they had gotten up for something back to the table, on the assumption that persons sitting around a dinner table could not be openly commanded to do work. Mrs. Tate seemed more subtle in her approach and would try to terminate the interplay from within, as it were, saying in the tone of voice being used in the interplay at the time that she guessed she had to get back to work. This often succeeded. Interestingly enough, she felt a little uneasy at using this technique and once admitted to those present, by means of a half-guilty smile, that she had been trying to affect a spontaneous reaction.

[17] A similar problem is sometimes found in our society when two persons, little acquainted, find themselves seated or standing close to one another for a long period of time. After a moment of "small talk" they find themselves with nothing to say and yet not in a position to terminate the interplay. Newspaper reading is often used as a thin excuse to break from the interplay in this situation. Newspaper reading seems to be the minimum activity by which an individual can withdraw from doing nothing and hence being open for interaction.

[18] Bales also seems to have noted this phenomenon. "We note joking and laughter so frequently at the end of meetings that they might almost be taken as a signal that the group has completed what it considered to be a task effort, and is reading for disbandment or a new problem. This last-minute activity completes a cycle of operations involving a successful solution both of the task problems and social-emotional problems confronting the group." Bales, "The Equilibrium Problem in Small Groups," *op. cit.*, p. 143.

# *Chapter XII: Interchange of Messages*

doi

In terms of the framework of this study, the minimal concrete unit of communication consists of the sign behavior of a sender during the whole period of time through which a focus of attention is continually directed at him. This unit of communication may be called a "natural message," or, where no confusion is likely, simply a "message." Short messages such as words or single sentences apparently have distinctive phonetic features; long messages, such as an uninterrupted thirty-minute talk, seem less neatly describable in phonetic terms. A single natural message may, of course, involve different pieces of information, but these differences are not relevant in terms of this study.

The concept of natural message has been employed in other studies of social interaction and has apparently been independently hit upon. One student gives the following definition for the basic unity of his study:

> The unit of verbal behavior chosen was arbitrarily defined as the entire statement a person made that occurred between the statements of individuals immediately preceding and following the person's expression.[1]

[1] Steinzer, *op. cit.*, p. 109

Two other students of interaction, in a work on attention quota or what they call "participation rates in small groups," give the following statement:

> The basic unit of participation labeled by the observers is the word, sentence, or longer statement of an individual that follows such a participation by one member and continues until it is terminated by an appreciable pause or by the participation of another member. In other words, an individual's uninterrupted contribution is taken to be one participation.[2]

[2] F. F. Stephen and E. Y. Mishler, "The Distribution of Participation in Small Groups: An Exponential Approximation," *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, XVII (598–608), 600.

It is interesting to note that the acting profession employs a similar unit, called "a speech." In Mencken's definition, a speech is "A unit of an actor's spoken part; it may be one word or a thousand."[3]

[3] H. M. Mencken, *The American Language*, Supplement II (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 691.

Our commonsense view of linguistic communication, especially of the conversational kind, leads us to expect that when one message

terminates, one of its recipients will take over the role of sender and convey another message. We expect a statement made by one person to be given an answer by another person. It is also to be expected that any particular message, whether statement or answer, will have two components, an expressive one and a linguistic one. Recipients will be concerned with what the sender says and also with the way in which he says it. However, when we examine conversational interaction closely, we find that a more complicated process frequently occurs.

First, we find that the recipient, in paying attention to the message, expresses the fact that he is doing so, by means of posture and facial expression. Also, as a larger and larger fraction of the message becomes transmitted, the recipient comes to be more and more in a position to know what the message will contain and what consequence it will have for him. The state of being in possession of this information seems to flow over, impulsively and spontaneously, into expressive behavior. In addition, the recipient seems to conduct an incipient internal monologue, conveying to himself or to anyone who is close enough or perceptive enough to hear, a rehearsal of how he is going to respond to the message when it is finally terminated, or (and this would seem to be more frequently the case) how he would like to respond to it were there no reason to exercise forbearance and restraint. We shall refer to this responsive expressive impulse and this self-communication as "take," following a Hollywood usage which has precisely recognized this element in communication. Of course, wittingly or unwittingly, the recipient's take is conveyed to the sender as a source of impression, giving the sender an opportunity of constantly checking up on the probably consequence of his message. When the sender has just terminated his message, the recipient perhaps reaches a culminative point in the judgments and considerations which he addresses to himself regarding the message. Once the recipient starts transmitting his considered reply to the previous sender, his take may diminish. Thus, if we modify our original decision of message to include the take along with the reply that emerges from it, we see that the expressive weighting in a message may decline in importance as the importance of the linguistic component increases.

In conversational interaction where messages are very brief and where participants feel they need not exercise much control over the expression of their responses, the take and reply in a message may become merged and may overlap considerably. In other kinds of communication situations, the two components—take and reply—may be distinctly separated. For example, we may explode when we receive a letter and an hour later answer it in a friendly and polite

way. In cases where an individual overhears others talking and is not himself in a position to answer them, we may get from the eavesdropper a take and no reply.

In general, then, a take is expected to be genuinely expressive, although in fact it is often feigned. It is not officially directed to the sender.[4] Sometimes it involves words of the class that are called expletives. A reply is expected to be more linguistic in nature. It is officially directed to the previous sender, not to oneself. This differentiation is also a temporal one; a take precedes (whether partly overlapping or not) a reply.

It is interesting to note that when a message is long, recipients frequently employ their take in a fairly open way as a signal of their attitude toward the message. Thus, during a lengthy political speech, cheers, hoots, and boos may be quite openly conveyed by recipients while they are still in the process of receiving the very message to which their take is a response.

On the island, adults in talking to other adults attempted on the whole to suppress any signs of their take to a message, except signs conveying the fact that they were attending to the message and were generously receptive to it. A frank take to the message seemed to be indulged in only when the recipient could have assurance that the sender would not see it. Among young people, who were presumably not yet obliged to treat each other with the delicacy required between adults, take was often not suppressed and was often given an important role in the communication process. Temper tantrums and sulking, while apparently relatively rare among island children, illustrate this. Further, on occasions when a person was being teased or was having his leg pulled, it was thought cooperative of him to evince as great a surprise take as possible, both in response to the lie he was being told and in response to being told that he had been told a lie. Among pre-adults, an explosive take in teasing situations seemed spontaneous and not put on; girls, especially, had the bait of attacking male teasers with their fists and feet out of desperation at not having any other means of response under control.[5]

It may be noted that in Dixon, as apparently elsewhere, unaddressed recipients sometimes neglect to prevent a frank expression of their valuation of the sender from appearing on their faces; feeling in observed, they take the opportunity of spontaneously expressing for their own private consumption what they really feel. Persons in Dixon sometimes suddenly turn on their unaddressed recipients in order to catch them for a moment in inadvertent sincerity.

* * * * *

[4] A sender may negatively sanction a recipient by openly asking the recipient to explain linguistically his take. This forces into the realm of accredited messages what was meant to be unaccredited.

[5] In our society the so-called "surprise party" features a take as the high point of the ceremony. The person for whom the party is given repays the givers by openly expressing a highly emotional take, one that mixes gratitude with loss of poise, before collecting himself for a linguistic response. Similarly, children are made to close their eyes until a present can be arranged so that they will see it suddenly and as a whole, thus allowing parents to observe their children in what is taken to be an unguarded reaction of pure delight.

When we examine an interplay we often find that the messages which occur within it are not evenly spaced out in time but occur, rather, in temporal clusters or groupings. Messages within one of these temporal groupings or spurts of communication are usually more closely related in content and culture than are messages which occur in different temporal groupings of the same interplay. Frequently the first message in one of these groupings presents a "statement" of some kind and the following messages in the grouping provide a reply, then a reply to the reply, and s on. A communication spurt of this kind may be called an interchange.[6]

An interchange may involve several persons but ordinarily it is restricted to two persons who alternately take the role of sender and addressed recipient while all the other participants in the interplay restrict themselves to the role of unaddressed recipient. The two persons may question or answer each other, or engage each other in parries and thrusts, while the unaddressed recipients merely watch. The two persons who are actively engaged in the interchange may not, of course, have equal sending rights. It should be added that in large formally-organized interplays of the actor-audience kind, the audience not only limits itself to conveying a few kinds of recognized messages but also comes to serve for the performer as a single addressed recipient. We thus tend to get interchanges between two actors, one of whom is the whole audience.[7]

After a particular interchange is completed, certain communication behaviors are possible: two other participants may provide the subsequent interchange of the interplay; the same participants may initiate a new interchange; one of the original participants may initiate a new interchange with a previously unaddressed recipient; or the interplay may be terminated.

It should be noted that a sender and his addressed recipient seem to accept greater obligation towards each other with respect to mutual responsibility, forbearance, and accommodation than do a sender and his unaddressed recipients. When there are no more than two recognized participants in an interplay, then, of course, the heightened responsibility between sender and addressed recipient necessarily applies to both participants.[8]

The unit of the interchanges has been considered so far chiefly in reference to its physical characteristics, namely, a rapid exchange of messages between two participants. In this chapter an attempt will be made to account for the nature of the unit by reference to two explanatory principles having to do, first, with communication as a ritual system, and, secondly, with communication as an informational system.

[6] This concept derives in part from Chapple's monograph, "Measuring Human Relations," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, XXII, 3–147, especially pp. 26–30, "Definition of an Event." See also A. B. Horsfall and C. A. Arensberg, "Teamwork and Productivity in a Shoe Factory," *Human Organization*, VIII (13–25), 19, where the following statement is given: "Thus the simplest observed event might have been a simple interaction, one which took place only between two persons on our record. The first action was initiation, the second was response; together the two actions established an initial, simple unit of interaction. We could label such a simple interaction"a." It might have been merely a single exchange such as greetings in passing, e.g., A: "Hello B," B: "Hello yourself,: or it might have continued for some time with many exchanges between the two. The measure of the time from its initiation in an act of A's to the last response in the last act of B's for the time gave the"duration" of an event. Speaking in general terms, an event terminates with a change of two, or with the entrance of a third person upon the scene, to whom the others, or one of them, act or respond."

[7] This can be very clearly seen in the question and answer interchanges between a revivalist preacher and his congregation.

[8] It may be noted that this responsibility is specifically counteracted in certain situations and specifically exploited in others. Confessors such as priests and psychoanalyst is sometimes arrange matters so that the confessing cannot see the involuntary gestural response which the confession evokes from the confessor. In this way the confessant is less likely to feel restrained in the presence of the confessor from talking of things which ordinarily constitute improper topics of conversation. Simi-

Explicitly or indirectly, any message involves, or may be taken by participants to involve, an evaluation or judgment of all persons who receive it. Hence the sender necessarily runs the risk of giving offense to the image that his recipients have of themselves and of him or to the image they have of things with which they feel identified. The rapid sequence of messages which follows after the initial message of an interchange either conveys to the sender an acknowledgment that his valuations are provisionally acceptable or modifies these valuations until provisional agreement is reached by all participants. The lull which follows an interchange is permissible because the working acceptance conveyed by the interchange ensures that a brief silence will not be taken as a sign that someone has been offended. A silence *during* an interchange usually conveys the fact that the recipients cannot frame a reply that is workable consistent with their own valuations and the valuations projected by the sender.

In Chapter VII it was suggested that a ritual model might well be fruitful in the study of interaction. Instead of employing a rationalistic bias, claiming that we perform our tasks strategically taking into consideration the probable response of others, we can employ a ritualistic bias, claiming that we interrupt our tasks in order to worship and placate the gods around us. Offerings and placations are, of course, a consequence of our taking into consideration the gods' likely response to us, but this likelihood is not established by indications that the gods make concerning their future effect upon us but rather by the religious tenets and norms which guide our treatment of them and the idols which represent them. In human interaction, however, the idol which we are ritually careful of is also ritually careful of us. If we offer him up a prayer or perform a gesture of obeisance, he, unlike other kinds of idols, can answer us back, blessing us, or returning the compliment of worship. Thus, instead of a single act by which a devotee expresses his attitude toward a graven image, we get a double act, a statement and reply, for the graven image is in a position to respond to the offering that has been made to him.

The ritual model of the interchange is suggested by Park in his introduction to Doyle's *Etiquette of Race Relations in the South*:

> Etiquette is concerned primarily with personal relations. It grows up in the first instance, perhaps, as the spontaneous expression of one person in the presence of another, of a sentiment of deference. Under ordinarily circumstances such an attitude of propitiation of one individual implies and is likely to evoke a corresponding expression of benevolent recognition on the part of that other. Expression and response rather than stimulus and response are the natural termini of every instance of social interaction.[9]

larly, in disciplinary and highly structured situations, where superordinates may be required to look straight ahead and not into the eyes of the sender. Third-person forms of address, found in extremely ritual situations, are perhaps attempts to deny the fact that face-to-face interaction is actually in progress.

[9] R. E. Park, *op. cit.* , p. 182.

By employing this model we can see that an interplay is not a continuous flow of communication; it proceeds by discontinuous jerks or steps, an interchange at a time.

Perhaps most interchanges—as Park implied—are limited to only two messages, expression and response, as he called them. An actor usually has a fairly clear understanding of the expectations of his recipients and is sensitive for many reasons to the rule that requires persons to be treated with tactful concern for their attributes or sacred qualities. We may therefore expect him to restrict his messages, in most cases, at least, to ones to which it is possible for a recipient to express acceptance. The recipient, in turn, must express something or else become responsible for the ambiguities conveyed by silence. In this way we can understand the prevalence of two-message interchanges.

We have attempted to account for the character of interchanges by reference to the fact that persons are ritually delicate objects which must be treated with care, with ceremonial offerings and propitiations. Working acceptance often marks the termination of an interchange, and a working acceptance is required in order to keep in control the eddies of insult and offense, of reprisals and counter-reprisals that persons can involve themselves in. A second explanatory principle for the nature of the interchange may be suggested now.

No matter what it is that a sender wishes to communicate, it would seem that his object is to communicate successfully; he wants the recipient to receive the message and to receive it correctly. If a recipient replies to the message he has received and gives some form of answer, then the original sender can use this reply as a test of whether or not his original message has been correctly received. Whether the reply is one of agreement or disagreement may be of secondary importance, as long as it is a meaningful reply, for if the reply is meaningfully related to the original message, then the original sender can be sure that the line of communication between himself and the other is in effective operation. The working acceptance that is achieved by the time the interchange terminates—whether the achievement of this measure of consensus has required only one exchange of messages or a long series of exchanges—may serve chiefly to signify that the participants understand one another, not that they agree with what they understand. And, in fact, many working acceptances seem to be limited to a meager consensus of this kind.

We have attempted to account for the fact that an interplay proceeds by steps, an interchange at a time, by reference to two factors, a ritual factor and an informational factor. Taken together, these two factors seem to supply a partial explanation for why an interchange takes the form that it does. The aim of this study, however, is to de-

scribe, not to explain, and in the next and following chapters many varieties of interchanges will be illustrated. Before proceeding to this, it will be convenient to raise four questions about the nature of interchanges.

A message has been defined as the sign behavior of an individual during the continuous period when he is the focus of attention. However, sometimes during a long message a sender will pause, obtain a momentary take of approval from his recipients, and then launch into what appears to be a different message. Interestingly enough, both Steinzer, and Stephen and Mishler, qualify their definition of a message in this way.

> If the person stopped talking for five or more seconds, then continued, the statement was counted as two units.[10]

[10] Steinzer, *op. cit.*, p. 109

> However, if there was a clear change of content during the course of a lengthy contribution, it was taken to be the beginning of a new unit of participation.[11]

[11] Stephen and Mishler, *op. cit.*, p. 600

One way to account for these double messages is to say that they are in fact separated by a fleeting message on the part of the recipient. Another explanation is possible. Often a particular sender contributes the last message in an interchange and then happens to be the sender who contributes the first message in the next interchange. We would then expect that there would be little if any connection between the two parts of the sender's message and that at the same time there would be little if any interruption of them on the part of others. Thus we have an analytical explanation of what originally appeared to be an awkward qualification that commonsense observation forced upon the definition of a message.

Secondly, it is apparent that while many interplays are wholly made up of clearly articulated interchanges, this is not always the case. For example, when men in Dixon gather to talk about their exploits as seamen in distant ports, one participant will tell his tale and the moment he has finished (or a moment before he has quite finished) another participant will tell his, and then another participant, and so on. In these conversations, one message will cling to the topic established by the previous one, but the statement-and-answer character of communication will be muted. In a certain sense it would be more realistic to say that each participant was merely waiting out his turn to take the floor and obtain a share of the attention indulgence. Thus, while this study is limited to a consideration of the interchange as a concrete unit, it should be understood that there are other natural units in interplay as well.

Thirdly, in making a distinction between interplay and interchange, it must be admitted that it is possible for an interplay to con-

tain only one interchange and hence be coterminous with it. Thus, there are many kinds of interchange taking the form of courtesies that are coterminous with the interplay that incorporates them. This fact may be placed alongside the fact that a social occasion may be coterminous with the interplay it incorporates.

Finally, as suggested in a previous chapter, an entire interplay may function as one message in a prolonged series or exchange of messages. An interplay may take a form other than the rapid exchange of concrete messages. The overall treatment of an individual during an interchange, or interplay, or social occasion may function as a single message in an extended exchange of messages. The individual may respond by appropriately adjusted behavior during the next interchange, or interplay, or social occasion, and this may in turn give rise to retaliatory or compensatory behavior on the part of others at the next meeting. Similarly, the tendency of one set of persons to come together and form a conversational cluster may be taken as a message and responded to by other persons forming their own cluster or by other persons attempting to disrupt or expand the one that is formed. Exchanges of messages of this kind may take the form of interchanges, the moves or messages of which are themselves complex interactive systems. These protracted or higher-order interchanges often rely partly upon messages which are solely expressive, but this need not be the case. Thus, a linguistic message on the part of one participant may carry implications for a particular recipient and not be responded to or answered by him until several interchanges have occurred or even until another social occasion. These protracted interchanges are often less neatly brought to a conclusion than are the simple concrete ones we have been discussing but they none the less provide an important area of study. For practical reasons, however, the present study is only concerned with the interchange of concrete messages.

# *Chapter XIII: Polite Interchanges*

doi

In Dixon, as apparently in other Bergand communities, there are many occasions when persons make a special effort to show respect and concern for each other. If a person become sick, neighbors offer to help out, and all the adult members of the community will make a point of asking anyone who might know about the current status of the sick person. When a person of any age has a birthday, the occasion will usually be marked by a party held for upwards of fifteen people; the immediate family, favorite relations and neighbors, and close friends. Invited persons all show their regard by bringing gifts. When a couple marries, a hundred or more persons will usually attend the wedding party held in the community hall, and many gifts will be given. When someone dies, males who are immediate neighbors, friends, and close relations will accompany the body to the burial ground. There are many other ceremonies of a similar kind. The islanders account for the ceremonial concern they show to one another by saying by saying that nothing much happens on the island so that persons are forced to turn to themselves as topics of conversation and as excuses to congregate. In any case, the ceremony seem to confirm a change in status of one or a few of the community's members, or to reaffirm community support of a member who is injured.

Ceremonial respect is frequently expressed or conveyed by the offering of gifts or assistance and the like. This study is not concerned with these ceremonies as such. However, some ceremonial offerings rely upon communication itself as a vehicle for conveying the offering. These provide clear examples of concrete interchanges and will be considered here.[1]

## Road Salutations

There are no sidewalks in Dixon, and anyone going to or from a center of organized social activity is usually obliged to travel part of the way on roads. These roads are never very crowded. Therefore

[1] While in general it did seem that islanders showed "genuine" respect and courtesy to one another, frequent demonstrations of considerateness cannot be taken, in themselves, as evidence of mutual regard. For example, if tradition makes islanders sensitive to high standards of mutual concern, and at the same time islanders have come to feel dislike for one another, then elaborate

when persons pass each other during the day, whether on foot, bicycle, cart, motor bicycle, or car, they cannot convincingly act as if the other has not been seen.[2] The overlooking of someone cannot be rationalized as having arisen from accident or communication barriers; overlooking can only be taken as an expression of the attitude of the overlooker to the overlooked.

Adult residents of the island who pass each other on the road, regardless of the community, class, or the sex from which they come, whether they are personally acquainted or "know of" each other, or neither, or obliged to enter into interplay with one another. Minimally this consists of a momentary meeting of the eyes in the exchange of an nod or verbal salutation, with no other interruption of their current ongoing activity.[3] If the persons are acquainted with each other, and especially if they have not engaged in interplay with each other for a long period, or if a ritually significant event has occurred to one of them recently, then a mere salutation or recognitional interchange is followed by a chat which can last for minutes.

Minimal salutation between adult commoners on the road involves the use of a few set interchanges consisting solely of a statement on the part of one actor and a reply on the part of the other, both delivered with a specific and quite standardized tone. The following are perhaps the most frequent.

Actor: "Ae, ae."
Other: "Ae, ae." (Used only by men.)

Actor: "Foine day."
Other: "Foine day."

Actor: "Better day."
Other: "Ae," or, "Grand day."

Actor: other's Christian name
Other: actor's Christian name

Actor: "Voo ist du?"
Other: "Nae sae bad."

When one of the persons is on a cart, or bicycle, or motor bike, then each usually waves or nods his head. When one of the persons is in a car, then he may lift one hand off the wheel and smile,[4] or only one of these, and receive a similar sign in return.

In Dixon, salutations seem to confirm and symbolize the right of all islanders to have certain kinds of access to all other islanders. More important, apparently, these salutations provide an opportunity of acknowledging allegiance to the island and to the commoners, in general, who live on it. In these interchanges, each participant seems to symbolize for the other not a particular person but the whole

politeness may merely represent an effort to conceal or hold back real hostilities that are considered to be improper. On much the same grounds, Bales has argued that gestures of solidarity shown during interaction may be evidence not of deep solidarity but of the concern shown by participants that breakdown of the interaction is threatened and that something must be done to bolster it. See his discussion of what he calls the "flip-flop" problem, *Interaction Process Analysis*, pp. 117–118.

[2] One exception is allowed by the islanders. When a car passes a pedestrian going the same way, it is appreciated that the task of driving on a curving, narrow road may constitute a legitimate excuse for not turning from the steering wheel to salute the pedestrian who has been passed. On the other hand, there are so few cars in Dixon—approximately fourteen—that when two cars pass each other going in opposite directions in the night, it is assumed that drivers can identify each other, and honking of the horn is a required salutation.

[3] In Capital City persons unacquainted with each other tend not to offer a salutation on passing each other on the sidewalk. At the same time, there are enough people on the street so that it is possible not to see persons that one passes close to.

[4] This seems to be the only occasion when men regularly use smiles as salutations.

island, and it is to the whole island, via its momentary representative, that the salute is give. Thus, a very standardized tone is employed on these occasions, as if to express the fact that individual differences between one person whom an individual may salute and another are at the moment irrelevant.

When a commoner is working in a field and is close to the road, and another commoner passes on the road, then a recognitional interchange occurs, or the person working interrupts his task and comes to the fence by the road for a brief chat. The ceremonial care that commoners on the island exert in each other's behalf is illustrated by the readiness of persons to interrupt their work for these reasons.[5] When the person in the field is not near the road, but near enough to be able to determine who the walker is, then a salutation occurs but without an interruption in work unless there is a very special reason for having a chat. However, there is a point not close to the road, but not too far away, where the willingness of the worker to come up to the road for a chat becomes, in a sense, optional, and not dictated by custom. Work at this middle distance from the road places the worker in a sign situation, for it becomes difficult to handle particular passers-by by means of conventionalized courtesy due anyone. The decision of the worker to come to the fence for a talk, or not to come to the fence, and the decision of the walker to invite this move, or to inhibit it, becomes an expression of the particular feelings between the two persons, an expression that is writ too large not to become an in opportune or embarrassing source of impression.

Meetings on the roads between members of the gentry and a commoner are characterized, minimally, by a salutation. On the part of the gentry this consists of a nod, a smile, a comment about the weather, or mention of the commoner's Christian name. On the part of the commoner this consists of mention of the surname of the other, "Doctor" or "Doctor Wren" in the case of the physician, comment about the weather, and, to a decreasing extent, "sir" to the laird. Very occasionally a male commoner will doff his hat to male gentry. These exchanges of recognition, by their linguistic and expressive content both, signify a relation of inequality.[6]

The salutations which occur when gentry meet each other almost always form part of a longer interplay. If their meeting is planned, then an interplay of some length is inevitable; if their meeting is accidental then—due to the fact that there are so few of them—the accident itself is grounds for a small celebration. First-naming is symmetrically indulged in, apparently as a symbol of the mood of equality, intimacy, and differentiation from gentry-commoner communication that characterizes these situations. A mere recognitional interchange would be a sign that the participants were on very bad terms.

[5] In Dixon, readiness to interrupt work in the fields for the sake of social interaction can also be partly explained by the fact that crofters apparently feel that their repetitive tasks are tedious and that any "break" is welcome.

[6] In general, solutions or recognitional interchanges seem to be possible between persons of widely different statuses. For example, in many army systems, all persons of lower rank have the right to salute, and receive a return salute from, officers of the highest rank. It may be noted that at cease-fire parleys, rules may bar opposing representatives from saluting each other or shaking hands, and that soldiers under disciplinary detention may be excluded from the right to give and receive salutes.

Until the age of approximately fourteen, children of commoners are, in certain senses, not obliged to conduct themselves in a socially responsible manner. In a sense they are neither sacred nor profane, but rather ritually neutral; in some ways they cannot give serious offends nor ought they to take it. One way in which this capacity of being a "non-person" is illustrated is by their meeting behavior. When they pass an adult on the road, they need not be given recognition by him and they seldom give recognition. Their eyes tend to meet the eyes of others less than is the case with adults. When this does occur they often become "shy" or a little embarrassed. Similarly, when recognition is given to a child in a home, this recognition often takes the form of play and often is not returned. Thus, too, an adult may sit next a child at a social or at dinner and never break the activity with a moment of recognition, which almost always occurs when adults are thus situated.

Seamen who put in at the Dixon pier are divided by residents into British and Foreign, usually on the basis of appearance. All seamen have the right to shop at the local stores, to attend the dances and dance with local girls, to attend the bi-monthly movies, and to use the local post office and trunk line. They also have the right to receive free medical attention. (All of these rights are also enjoyed by tourists.) Further, foreign and British seamen who have used the pier for years have friends in the community with whom they may upon occasion spend an evening or who visit with them for a while on their boats. The seamen recognize the obligation of receiving the local customs officer and allowing inspection.

It is the opinion of some commoners that foreign seamen are of the lowest type, uncouth and uncivilized. In any case, foreign seamen are rarely given salutations by residents whom they may pass on the road or stand next to in the shops. Frequently residents will look at these seamen, as they pass them or stand near them, but not recognize them as persons with whom interplay is to be initiated.

British seamen and tourists share a mixed status with respect to salutation rights. Sometimes they will be treated as foreign seamen are, as if not there in the capacity of persons but there merely in the capacity of objects to be looked at. Knowing the language, however, they sometimes initiate a salutation to residents whom they may pass. Residents then usually reply, although with a gesture in which they patently put very little feeling. Sometimes, however, residents will proffer a brief nod to these strangers, or even a truncated reference to the weather. A similar gesture will then be returned to them. Perhaps such interchanges sometimes assure the outsider that within limits he is safe. In any case, the nod seems to convey equality coupled with extreme distance.

There are on the island at least three persons whose faces are deformed in such a way as to affect speech patterns. They are by "aesthetic" standards "ugly," and ugly to such a degree that looking at them throws attention off. They tend to remove themselves from contexts where recognitional interchanges would ordinarily occur and to restrict their communication to situations which are clearly defined in technical as opposed to social terms. These persons have developed a pattern of withdrawal and even in the circle of their own family play an atypical ritual role.[7]

[7] The communication problem presented by these persons is considered in chapter xx.

## Social Occasion Salutations

During community-wide social occasions, when up to two hundred persons may be gathered together in the community hall, it is not expected that each person present will enter into a salutation army interchange with every other person present. There are sufficient intervening barriers to supply excuses for neglect. During intermissions, in moving from the hall to the hallways or smaller rooms, it is necessary of persons to pass each other in close quarters. On these occasions a minimum interchange of some kind is required. Similarly, in sitting down on a bench, whether during teatime or during a dance, persons on either side are usually acknowledged in some way. (This general pattern of showing responsibility to those closest to one also obtains in shops and outdoors on occasions when crowds collect for an auction or the like.) Salutations in these circumstances may contain the same words as are found in salutations between persons passing on the road, but the intonation appears to be different, apparently giving less weight and seriousness to the hall salutation. Typically, interchanges involving two messages will occur. For example:

Actor: "Good crowd."
Other: "Aye, fine crowd."

Actor (during whist): "Good score?"
Other: "Aye."

Actor: head nod.
Other: nod returned. (Between male adults.)

Actor: smile.
Other: smile returned. (Between women.)

Actor: "So."
Other: "so so."

Actor touches arm of other.
Other: Christian name of actor. (A woman to another woman or to a child.)

Actor: "Well, well."
Other: "Well, well."

Actor: other's Christian name.
Other: actor's Christian name.

Since a person can reasonably take the stand that it is feasible to salute only one person at a time, the possibility arises in the hall that while an individual is engaged in saluting one person he will pass immediately in front of another person and not be able to salute him in doing so. This kind of overlooking is not justified on the road.

The smiles and nods that persons in Dixon used as a brief recognitional interchange also occurred in houses where interplay might lapse during domestic activity. Thus, the female head of the household tended to involve those present who were not out of the immediate family in occasional smile interchanges. This occurred especially when eyes happened accidentally to meet. Friends were given assurance in this way, throughout the period of their stay in the house, of the welcome and approval given them. In the hall, often no one was quite in a position to offer anyone else assurance as to the propriety of his presence and so the kind of smile interchange characteristic of household activity was not possible.

When a group of five or six persons worked on a particular piece of land, pulling weeds, clearing stones, planting potatoes, spreading manure, raking hay, or any of the other croft tasks, the work would be interrupted every fifteen or twenty minutes when two workers happened to find themselves close to each other. The interruption would consist of a brief interchange in which the workers would affirm to each other that the work was getting done or make a comment about the weather. These pauses, and the longer ones for ten o'clock tea, one o'clock lunch, four o'clock tea, and supper, seemed to express the fact that the workers were not merely animals engaged in routine labor all day long but were persons, capable and desirous of conducting social interaction with other persons.

## Minor Propitiatory Interchanges

Salutations provide examples of very brief interchanges, many of them reduced to the bare minimum of two short messages. For another set of illustrations we may turn to occasions when persons feel they must exercise "etiquette," or "manners," or "courtesy."

The role of etiquette is clearly seen when persons impinge upon each other in some accidental and incidental way. At such times, they frequently make use of stereotyped social formulae as a means of handling the situation and ensuring that no offense is given. These

formulae cover requests for small favors, apologies for accidents, misdemeanors, and the like.

Forms of etiquette and courtesy represent, in a sense, model interchanges. These forms of communication plainly recognize that persons are objects of value that must be treated with ritual care in an environment that is full of potentially offensive signs. In the case of many of these interchanges, the number of messages and the approximate content for each message have been formally laid down in books on etiquette.[8]

When one person in Dixon passes in front of another in such a way that this can be interpreted as an act of precedence, or when one person touches another in a way that may be interpreted as an aggression, then the actor in many cases offers a pardon to the other person. A pardon begged is a corrective strategy, a way of exorcising a possible slight already committed and neutralizing a sign situation. Interchanges involving pardons and apologies frequently have a very simple structure:

1. Actor performs potentially offending act.
2. Actor says to other: "Sorry," or "Oh, oh," or "Pardon," or "Excuse me."
3. Other terminates the interchange by saying, "O.k.," or "That's all right," or merely by smiling.

When one person in Dixon wants to ask another for a minor assistance of some kind—an assistance which might be interpreted as an act of servant-like subordination on the part of the individual offering the assistance—then an interchange of messages is frequently required in order to ensure that offense will not be taken. These interchanges are not corrective, since the potentially offending act has not yet occurred; they are, rather, preventive. Thus, if one person wishes to have something passed to him by another, or wishes to have the other change position a little, etc., the following interchange frequently occurs:

1. Actor formally makes a request in a supplicating tone of voice, e.g., "Will ya please pass the . . .," or "Do ya mind moving a little so I can . . . "
2. Other agrees to perform act and at the same time states that he has not been offended by the request, e.g., "Surely," or "With pleasure," or "Uh hm."
3. Other then performs the service.
4. Actor offers some kind of thanks to the other.

[8] Thank-you notes, and "bread and butter" letters ("roofers") provide nice examples as to specification, paragraph by paragraph, of courtesy letters. The round of correspondence called forth by a letter of introduction provides an example of specification as to number of messages.

5. Other terminates the interchange by a brief not or by saying "Aye," etc.

If the favor is considerable or is of the kind that is very likely to be taken as an expression of relative "status," then the interchange may include an extra round of statement and reply, in which the actor, after the other agrees to perform the favor, asks again if the other is quite sure that he will not mind performing the service. To this the other usually gives a second assurance that no offense is being taken, and the interchange terminates in the usual way.

## Terminative Echoes

As suggested in the last chapter, during informal conversational interplay it is possible for one participant to introduce a message and then for the next speaker to give very little attention to what has been said but rather to make use of his opportunity as sender to contribute a message involving mention of his own experience. The second speaker will allow the first speaker to finish his message, and will take a cue as to what range of things ought to be talked about from the first message, but he will go on to put his own oar in, as it were, not bother, really, to answer the first statement. The first message seems to establish a license as to what sort of self-reference can be made, and the following speakers in the interplay exercise the license in their own behalf. Interchanges of this kind—if it is proper to refer to them as interchanges—will have as many messages in them as the participants have personal experiences that can be mobilized descriptively for the occasion.

Another favorite conversational interchange is one in which the first message makes a claim which the other participants cannot quite let pass, and some qualifying messages are directed to the first one until matters have been sufficiently put aright to allow the interchange to end.

In Dixon, apparently more so than in more argumentative and less polite subcultures, many claims made by a participant in the interplay were not duplicated by other participants or disputed by them but rather politely honored in a rapid if half-hearted way. Whether the sender implicitly asks his recipients to respond with shock, surprise, laughter, agreement, or approval, and whether or not recipients were genuinely in sympathetic tune with the speaker's implied request, they tended to comply.

Every member of the community seemed versed in the use of an extensive set of brief phrases, by which an expectation introduced by a person's message could be fulfilled, the interchange quickly terminated, and the respondent freed from further need to act out

what was perhaps not felt.[9] So smooth was this technique that on many occasions speakers did not become aware that their face had just been saved. Especially useful were proverbs, which committed the respondent to nothing and could usually be used to terminate an interchange regardless of the message with which it had been started.

If the first message in an interchange implied that the recipients ought to be shocked at why they had just heard, phrases such as, "My feeder," "Such o ting," would be chorused in response. If a point of view had been voiced that recipients could not agree with, they would guardedly respond with, for example, "There's something in what you say," or "I donna kin." A few of the island's favorite terminative echoes are given below, following instances of interchanges in which they were employed.

A commoner of wide repute, known as one given to bragging: "I've been in every house and know everyone on the island." His host: "Dat'll be right, dus du kin."

Commoner, proud of his Ford car: "I've been driving it for seven years, mind you, and never a part I've had to buy." Passenger: "I hear you, boy."

Hotel maid, speaking about scullery boy having stayed out till six o'clock. "It's no right now, is it." Cook: "Past spaekin about."

[9] In American subcultures there is a corresponding list of accommodative echoes, for example, "Tsk-tsk," "You don't say," "My gosh," "What d' ya know," "Really," etc., each of which terminates a two-message interchange. Without command of these pat replies, it is difficult to be at ease in the conversation of a particular group.

# *Chapter XIV: The Organization of Attention*

doi

We have considered the interplay and some of the units of interaction which may occur within it once accredited participation has been established. Let us now return to consider some of the structural characteristics of interplay as such.

It has been suggested that an interplay characteristically involves a focussing of the attention of the listeners upon the speaker. The initiation and maintenance of this organized attention, the transfer of it from one speaker to another, and its final dissolution all involve problems in attention management.

Persons who wish to be accorded attention as senders—to be given the floor, as it were—frequently precede or initially accompany their messages with signs conveying a specific request for attention. These signs consist of speech infections, interjections such as "oh" or "hello," calling out of a recipient's name or "catching" his eye. It is possible to distinguish between those signs which request accredited participants to focus their attention on a particular participant and those which request individuals to enter into interplay and become accredited recipients. These signs (whether initiating a message or an interplay) frequently impress the potential recipient in such a way as to prepare him for the length of the message that is to come, for its urgency, and to some extent for its character. Very frequently, an immediate reply is given to these signs by the recipient, assuring the sender that his message will be received and that, in a sense, it will not be taken as an offense for him to proceed with it.[1] Sometimes the reply may contain an explicit request to hold off for a moment so that the individual can prepare himself for the interaction he is being called into. In addition to this information, the reply may also provide the original sender with some idea as to how willing the other person really is to become involved in interaction. Typical replies in answer to a request for attention consist of interjections such as "yes" and "uh hm," a pause in he recipient's ongoing behavior, and orientation to the recipient's eyes in the direction of the sender. In other words, before a potential sender launches into his message he may

[1] It may be worth noting that persons in highly structured subordinate positions, for example butlers, may be required to call the other into interplay by means of signs which preserve the illusion that the subordinate is not initiating interplay.

signify a request for clearance and wait for clearance to be given him before proceeding.

Where interplay is limited to a few persons who are not at the moment related to each other in such a way as to make offense or misunderstanding likely, a potential sender may not wait for an actual reply to his request for clearance but merely mark the point where it should have occurred by introducing a slight pause and change of tone between his initial request for clearance and his message. In many formally-organized interplays, however, clearance becomes a codified practice. At a formal meeting, for example, a participant who wishes to become the accredited sender often must first stand up or get authorization from the chairman.[2]

It will be apparent that the ability to refuse, overlook, or postpone a request for clearance gives the potential recipient an important way of exerting control over participation obligations that important senders place upon him. Clear cases of this can be found in situations where there is some doubt as to which of several requests to initiate an interplay a recipient will honor. For example, in order to obtain service, a patron may attempt to catch the eye of a waitress or store clerk, thus initiating an interplay in which requests and orders can be presented.[3] Service personnel may wish to avoid ill-timed involvement of this kind and can do this by averting their own eyes.[4] Similar cases occur in situations where a potential recipient can choose from among several accredited participants the one to be given clearance. The power of choice, in this case, may be an official right, as in the case of a chairman at a meeting,[5] or an unofficial right, as in the case of an "informal leader" during interplay.[6]

Once clearance has been accorded to a potential sender, and he begins to send his message, both sender and recipient may continue to convey their involvement in communication by means of what we might call attention signs. These constitute a minor but significant communication courtesy. Attention signs are frequently conveyed by a medium other than the one employed for the message, thus ensuring that jamming does not occur between the two streams of signs. Direction of the eyes in the case of both sender and recipient is a typical attention sign during spoken communication.[7]

It does not seem to be usual for a sender to lose interest in his communication role. Therefore attention signs which pass from sender to recipient do not play a vital role in the organization of communication, except, of course, as a means of distinguishing addressed recipients from unaddressed recipients. Attention signs from recipients to a recognized sender seem to play a more important role. They act as an "informative feedback," telling the sender of the effect of his message in time for him to modify his behavior in a direction

[2] Clearance signs can also be important in mediated communication. Many organizations have a policy of answering each letter with two letters, one to say that the letter has been received and read, and a later one to give the answer originally requested. So, too, the receipt in the case of financial transactions serves as lasting proof for the sender that his financial communication has been received.

[3] So commonly do we employ eye-to-eye looks as a means of initiating an interplay or addressing a message that when we suddenly find ourselves in this relation to someone with whom we are not communicating at the time, we frequently feel flustered and look away or enter into momentary interplay to regularize the situation. Those who look into another's eyes without acknowledging this in either of the above ways are sometimes thought to be "cold" or "hard."

[4] In many societies, averting of eyes is apparently an institutionalized way of conveying a modest and tactful self-restraint from entering into the intimacy of an interplay.

[5] H. S. Elliott provides an example of this in his consideration of the problems of management that a chairman of a meeting faces, in *The Process of Group Thinking* (New York: Association Press, 1929), pp. 73–74: "The chairman would, on the one hand, get every person to take part and see to it that all points are represented and, on the other hand, restrain the inveterate talker and keep him from monopolizing the discussion. Just to look encouragingly toward those who are not taking part and not to look toward the ones who want to participate in essentially is a help.

calculated to obtain a desired response from recipients. These signs also warn a sender if there is a danger that the focus of attention is about to break up or pass on to a new sender.

It has been suggested that clearance signs and attention signs play an important role in the organization of interplay. These signs, especially attention signs, provide the sender with a continuous indication of the stability of the communication structure. They constitute what Ruesch and Bateson refer to as communication about communication, or "metacommunication."[8]

It is customary for a sender to close his message with a gesture or speech inflection conveying the fact that the message has ended and that the sender is now ready to relinquish his role and himself become a recipient. These termination-of-message signs may sometimes be used by a recipient as evidence that clearance has been given to him. The most clearcut sign of this kind, perhaps, is the intonation and word-order we employ when we ask a question.[9]

It is to be noted that clearance signs which signify the termination of a message may be distinguished in practice from those clearance signs that are employed to terminate an interplay,[10] and these, in turn, from signs which signify the termination of a social occasion. For example, a resolution may be required to terminate a committee meeting, and a special song, or a special lighting and staging effect, may be employed to terminate a social occasion. It may be noted that in the Dixon primary schools, where some of the pupils have not yet learned to interpret or respect cues which signify the termination of an interplay, the teacher, after calling a pupil up to her desk to check over an exercise, sometimes had to propel the pupil back to his or her seat (usually in an affectionate or joking way) in order to bring the hearing to a close.

* * * * *

Let us use the term "sending position" to refer to the spatial or ecological point at which any participant in an interplay is or could be located, relative to the other participants. Senders find it useful to be at a sending position at which it is possible and convenient to receive attention cues from all the recipients. The degree to which any particular location permits this kind of reception is a measure of its favorability as a sending position. Whenever there are more than two participants in an interplay, one participant is likely to be in a position that is more favorable than the position held by any of the other participants. During informal interplay in Dixon there was a certain amount of surreptitious (and even unconscious) jockeying for favorable sending positions, while, on the other hand, partici-

Frequently the expression of the face indicates that a person is on the point of taking part and just recognizing this desire will bring timid ones into the discussion. Sometimes the chairman may call upon certain ones by name. If a person persists in monopolizing the discussion he may find it necessary to restrain the talkative member. He can do this easily by tactfully saying, "Wait a minute, Mr. - - -, we want to hear what Mr. - - - thinks about this question!"

[6] W. F. White, "Small Groups, Large Organizations," in Rohrer and Sherif, eds., *Social Psychology at the Crossroads* (New York: Harper, 1951), pp. 297–312, provides on p. 300 an illustration of how an informal leader can serve as a sort of sanctioned for those who should take over the focus of attention. "Several men are standing in the club room in groups of two, two, and three. Individual X comes in and the three little groups immediately reform into one larger group, with the seven men remaining silent while X talks, and each man seeking to get the attention of X before he himself speaks."

[7] This is apparently not a universal practice. An early report on the Northwest Coast Amazons claims that: "When an Indian talks he sits down, no conversation is ever carried on when the speakers are standing unless it be a serious difference of opinion is under discussion; nor when he speaks does the Indian look at the person addressed, any more than the latter watches the speaker. Both look at some outside objects. This is the attitude also of the Indian when addressing more than one listener, so that he appears to be talking to someone not visibly present." See Thomas Whiffen, *The North-West Amazons* (London: Constable, 1915), p. 254.

[8] Ruesch and Bateson, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24.

[9] As Bales points out, in "The Equilibrium Problem in Small Groups," *op. cit.*, asking a question is an effective way of signalling a desire to relinquish the role of sender with the expectation that the addressed recipient will then take up the role of sender. Of course the effectiveness of this sign depends upon the addressed recipient accepting the obligation and responsibility of the role that is being proferred him. During informal conversation, recipients usually accept this obligation so automatically

pants frequently arranged to sit or stand so as not to block any other participant's line of vision too much.

It is apparent that interplays will vary according to the disposition of favorable and unfavorable sending positions established in it. At one extreme we have cases where only one or two points provide good sending positions, so that a participant who wants to become a sender must first move into position to do so. This is the case in platform-audience communication, where a potential sender must first come to the front of the audience and preferably stand on a raised platform. A characteristic of this kind of communication arrangement is that one physically closed interplay can be maintained even though an extremely large number of persons, relative to the size of the region, are packed into the region.

At the other extreme we have the ecological arrangement by which all participants are in a favorable and more or less equally favorable sending position. The typical case is where three or four persons have come together and face each other in a circle for the purpose of informal conversation. A sending circular of this kind provides the one important exception to the rule that one participant in an interplay usually has the best sending position.[11]

The case of sending circles, where all participants are in a favorable sending position, provides some interesting complications. If all the persons in a bounded region are to be involved in the same sending circle—that is, if there is to be only one interplay, and all participants are to have an equally favorable sending position in it—then there is a relatively low limit to the number of persons who can be contained or enclosed in the region. If the bounded region is to be filled with many effectively closed sending circles of three or four persons each, with no participant from one circle penetrating the area enclosed by the participants in another circle, then a relatively large number of persons can be enclosed by the region. There are geometrical as well as empirical grounds for this statement. Two illustrations may be given:

In Dixon the community hall dance floor is about twenty feet wide and thirty feed long. In dances such as the "old-fashioned waltz," the sending circles consist of couples, and more than thirty couples can easily be enclosed in the hall. When square dances such as "Lancers" or "Quadrilles" are danced, however, the hall has a capacity of only three "sets," each of these sets constituting a sending circle of eight participants.

In Dixon it is customary to hold large birthday parties for persons of all ages. On these occasions it is not uncommon for a family to fill their small cottage with twenty guests. A variation of the game of "spin the bottle" is popular at these times. The game requires one

that they seldom realize that an obligation has been fulfilled—although, of course, they may give a false answer, or an insufficient answer, or an unserious answer. However, at formal meetings, a guest speaker may request questions from the floor at the end of his speech, and he and the chairman may expect that a period of questions and answers will follow, and yet no one in the audience may take up the role of sender which the guest speaker has, by his request for questions, attempted to relinquish. At such times we can see more clearly that our ordinary willingness to make at least some answer to a question is the fulfillment of an obligation. It is interesting to note that high-placed political figures who are asked questions by newsmen may find themselves in the dilemma of giving no answer and thus failing to fulfill the obligation of communicators, or giving an ambiguous answer those subtle expressive overtones may be examined for implications that are embarrassing. The dilemma is sometimes resolved by the curt phrase, "No comment," by which the individual can acknowledge the fact that a question has been put to him, that he has correctly received it, and that he accepts, in general, the role and obligations of communicator

[10] In mediated communication, clear differences can sometimes be found between signs which terminate a message and signs which terminate an interplay. In one-way wireless communication, for example, a word such as "over" may be given as a sign that a message has ended and that the other participant has clearance, and a word such as "out" may be given as a sign that the interplay has been terminated. In the case of wireless communication, the initiation of an interplay may call for signs that are similarly explicit and specific, e.g., "calling . . ," "come in, . . ."

[11] This point has, of course, been recognized in the literature. For example, Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 64, in talking about a discussion club called a Bible Circle, says: "This is a good name because some circular arrangement gives the best results in discussions. The important thing is that just as far as possible the members have a chance to look into the face of the other members." Circle organization, of course, solves a ceremonial problem; no one need be given the head or the foot of the table and the invidious evaluation which such positions may be taken to express.

closed circle, however, and seems in fact to be a ceremonial exercise in this kind of communication arrangement. Because of the size of the rooms, occasions arise when all the guests at a party cannot be fitted into one circle, although they can easily be fitted into a number of smaller circles.

It is to be noted, finally, that platform-audience organization enables more persons to be incorporated in a region of given size for purposes of communication than can be incorporated in this region by sending circle organization, regardless of how small the circles are and how closely they are packed.

# *Chapter XV: Safe Supplies*

doi

When an individual enters the perceptual range of others, a kind of responsibility is placed upon him. Normally he must assume that his behavior will be observed and that it will be interpreted as an expression of the attitude he has toward those who observe him. In the realm of undirected communication, this implies that he will be expected to behave in a decorous manner, giving appropriate consideration to the presence of others. The requirements of decorous behavior, in our society and in others, will not be considered here. In the realm of directed communication—for example, conversation—the individual must assume that both his messages and his behavior as a recipient will be expected to contribute to the maintenance of the working acceptance.

Once individuals have extended accredited participant status to one another and have plunged into conversation, then it is necessary to sustain a continuous flow of messages until an inoffensive occasion presents itself for terminating the interplay. It appears that some persons can be so distantly related to one another that very little pretext may be needed to break off conversation and relapse into silence, and that some persons can be so intimately related to one another that on many occasions they can assume that no offense will be given when conversation lapses. It also seems that a wide range of social distance and of situations exists between these two extremes where a fairly good excuse is needed before conversation can safely lapse.

In those situations where lapse of communication is of itself inappropriate communication, participants must make sure that someone among them is conveying a message and that it is an acceptable or appropriate message. Since the stream of messages must be constantly fed, participants sometimes tend to use up all the appropriate messages that are available to them. The problem then arises: what can be used as a safe supply, that is, what can be used as a reliable source of acceptable messages? At certain times, especially during lengthy informal interplay, this problem introduces a need for a high order of ritual management.

1. A famous kind of safe supply is found in what is often called "small talk," that is, issues that can appropriately be raised between persons of widely different status without this fact prejudicing the social distance between them, and to which almost everyone can be expected to have the same attitude.[1] In our society, animals, children,[2] accidents, and the weather usually form the object of small talk. In Dixon, the catch—or lack thereof—which the two local fishing boats made that day was frequently a subject for comment. During the spring, lambs and foals were also safe topics, since it was assumed that no one could be oblivious to their charm. If anyone on the island had had an accident, or taken sick, or died, or gotten married, these facts were constantly employed by others in small talk. A sickness lasting a few weeks was especially useful, for persons could ask one another several times a day how the unfortunate one was progressing and comment sympathetically. The weather was very frequently mentioned in Dixon and among those actually engaged in crofting was often mentioned in relation to its effects upon the crops.[3] Comments about the weather are often thought to be rather empty things. On the island this seemed not to be the case. To farmers, of course, weather is an important contingency, but more than this seemed to be involved. If the weather was bad, as it usually was, comments always played this down and conveyed the fact that the individual was not being beaten by it. The worst days would call forth such comments as:

> "No such a good day." "Aye, it's terrible weather." "No very good for the taties." "No, it's not that."

Every time interchanges occurred, the participants seemed to reaffirm their loyalty to conditions on the island and to the persons who were staying on it.

Another widely employed source of small talk in Dixon was provided by recent purchases of material artifacts. Everyone on the island, whether gentry or crofter, was obliged to face many of the same conditions of domestic discomfort and to attempt to meet them by means of the objects available at the local shops or by mail-order. Both men and women took an interest in these matters, and if conversation lagged, participants could always fall back on a discussion of the merits of the latest household tool, or gadget, or comfort that had been purchased.

Two facts of interest may be cited concerning small talk. First, some groups seem to place special attention on skills regarding small talk and to feel that an important symbol of membership is the capacity to sustain a conversation of small talk whenever necessary. Members of such groups may even undergo conscious training in this

[1] Malinowski uses the phrase "phatic communion" to refer to the exchange of gossip and small talk; see Supplement One to Ogden and Richards, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 314–315. Strangers who are close to each other physically but not engaged in communication may often fail automatically into momentary accredited interaction if an unexpected event occurs that both patently observe and that provide momentary guarantee that their attitudes to the event will be similar, while at the same time providing some grounds for feeling that the basis of communication will not lead to further entangling involvements but will be easily terminated.

[2] Animals and children that can be gotten to behave for a moment in a human-like fashion are especially useful as a safe supply.

[3] This corresponds to what is sometimes called "shop talk."

kind of behavior. Secondly, it seems to be in the character of small talk that it is quickly exhausted; small talk allows for comments, not discussions. Hence when persons are to be engaged in conversation for a considerable length of time, other safe supplies must be employed.

2. During informal interplay, participants frequently resort to a topic of conversation that is sometimes called *gossip.* This involves reference to persons who are not present (and, sometimes, to temporarily inactive aspects of present persons) and to past conduct on their part which can be taken as illustrative of approved or disapproved attributes.[4] The conduct gossiped about must be sufficiently clearcut and spectacular to ensure that all listeners will place the same interpretation on it. In order to maintain a working acceptance, topics upon which persons may place opposing values must be avoided.

On the island two forms of gossip seemed popular. In one case, a speaker aired his feelings, which had been hurt or injured by what he considered to have been an improper action on the part of the absent person who was the object of the gossip. Recipients were asked in this way to confirm for the speaker the fact that he had been unjustly injured and, perhaps, to thereby confirm the principles of justice that the injury had put into question. In the other case, the gossiper did not refer to acts which had offended him in particular but to conduct on the part of the object of gossip which the speaker approved or disapproved even though he had not directly gained or suffered by it. In these cases, the speaker took a kind of editorial attitude—the community's point of view—toward the conduct about which he was gossiping. It is interesting to note that the islanders had a high awareness of community standards and so, in commenting upon a noteworthy action of an absent person, a speaker could merely provide a flat objective statement of the act, with a marked lack of emphasis either linguistically or expressively, and be correct in his assumption that this would be enough to call forth from his recipients the expected response. The most extreme infractions of the community's standards, as, for instance, when an open fight occurred at a community social, would be gossiped about in a stilled atmosphere, the speaker providing only a toneless, brief statement of the occurrence. Outsiders, of course, would misread these conversations, feeling that an act of no importance was being considered or that the islanders were extraordinarily fair in their references to social delicts.

As a safe supply, gossip is limited by the fact that the self accorded to each participant is usually defined partly in terms of minimal loyalties to particular persons not present. Breach of these loyalties by gossip conveyed or tolerated may disrupt the tenor of the interaction.

[4] Gossip is usually analyzed as an informal means of social control exerted by the sanction of adverse or favorable public opinion. This gives to gossip a social function with respect to community standards. This wider function of gossip is irrelevant here. We are concerned with gossip's social function in terms of maintenance of interplay.

An islander who is married engages in very little serious gossip about his spouse, nor do children of whatever age gossip about their parents. Such acts of disloyalty would be a source of embarrassment to those who observed them. Similarly, a commoner exerts certain controls on the amount of gossip he will indulge in about absent commoners in conversation with the gentry and outsiders. On the whole, only commoners who are generally disrespected and regarded as more or less beyond the pale are gossiped about in such a context.

On the island, a very happy supply of gossip is found in what are sometimes called "post mortems." After a social, members of a household would discuss over breakfast and lunch the previous evening's events, assured that all participants in the conversation had had the same experience and would be able to participate actively. Reference would be made to what persons wore, to how they behaved, to the fact that the local baritone could sing better but was trying out a new song, to the fact that the boys from Northend didn't know all the words to the song they had sung, to the fact that a local woman had gray hair showing at the roots and that if you were going to use dye you should look after it well, etc.

3. Another safe supply employed on the island consisted of statements made by the speaker concerning the state of his health. This was especially employed by older people and by women. There was an understanding that self-references of this kind did not constitute bragging or a request for too much attention. Recipients could be expected to be ready with an indulgent reply. It seemed that the more "serous" the disability suffered by a person, the wider the range of persons with whom he could employ his disability as a safe topic of conversation.

4. An important variety of safe supply relies on the use of an unserious definition of the situation. An inoffensive choice of message during interplay may have to fulfill so many requirements that it may be advisable for the sender to abstain from serious communication and instead convey a message in an obvious spirit of levity. Messages conveyed in an unserious tone may be inoffensive and yet contain statements that would ordinarily be offensive.[5] The point here is that there are many occasions when it is easier to find a message that would be offensive if conveyed seriously than it is to find a message that is inoffensive when conveyed seriously.[6] Levity is useful, furthermore, because it permits and even enjoins the use of unlimited exaggeration. This kind of clarification increases the likelihood that persons of widely different statuses will be sensitive to the message and take the same attitude (although in jest) to it.

Levity, as a safe supply, usually entails a kind of unserious ritual profanation of the sender or of the persons to whom he addresses

[5] A message conveyed in an unserious manner cannot be taken directly as a reflection of the valuations of the sender. Indirect judgments must be made on the basis of an understanding as to the kinds of persons who would make a point about making a joke about a particular given matter.

[6] Unserious messages may themselves be offensive if they refer to matters too sacred to joke about or to matters which ought to have been considered acceptable enough for ordinary, serious communication.

his message. It is sometimes referred to as kidding, razzing, raillery, joking, banter, joshing, or leg-pulling. It seems to be especially important where persons who have always been in one specific relationship to each other find themselves in an interplay in which another kind of relationship prevails.[7]

On the island, joking as a safe supply was especially employed between crofters and non-crofters. Thus the doctor would complain that everyone insisted upon joking with him when he attended socials and that no other kind of behavior on his part seemed wanted by others. Joking seemed to be especially prevalent and especially easy between older women of the commoner class and young males of some outside status, possibly because a member of one of those groups was in very little competition with a member of the other group, and they could hence afford to be on sufficiently easy terms with one another to allow for joking.[8]

5. A safe supply is found in courtesies, especially those involving small offerings and assistances. Thus, whenever it is possible for one person to be defined as host or hostess, it is possible for that person to devote many messages to solicitous enquires [*sic*] after the comfort of the guests and to offerings of food and the like. As has been suggested, codified manners provide an island of safety to swim to when in doubt or when you want to retreat.

* * * * *

Safe supplies have been defined as stores of messages that persons can fall back upon when they are in a position of having to maintain interplay and yet not having anything to say. It is worth noting briefly that islanders employ two social strategies that are akin to the use of safe supplies, being, perhaps, functional alternatives for safe supplies, and yet somewhat different from them.

First, there were certain acts of a task-oriented kind, such as eating, smoking, or knitting, which islanders, under certain circumstances, allowed to be interspersed between messages, so that the same number of messages could be stretched out over a longer period of time without arousing a feeling that unwanted silences occurred. The womenfolk especially employed this technique in the case of knitting, and three or four women knitting together could by that means maintain themselves in a kind of slowed or dormant interplay, where it was understood that those present were accredited participants but where spates of knitting and silence were permissible between messages. It was considered improper for men to knit (although in some cases this would have provided them with a better income than they could earn on the croft), and they often employed

[7] In social anthropological literature, the term "joking relationship" has come to signify a special privilege of familiarity and disrespect between two persons. The relationship serves to prevent the expression of hostility, even though important grounds for hostility exist. Harmony must be maintained because the persons are not in a position to express their feelings by means of conflict or avoidance. They are not in a position to do so because each is intimately and dependently related to the same third person, or to third persons who are themselves intimately related to one another. (For a statement and bibliography see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "A Further Note on Joking Relationships," *Africa*, XIX, 133–140.) The analysis of joking employed in this study follows the social anthropological one but with a shift in emphasis from the need to maintain a relationship to the need to maintain working acceptance during interplay. The position is taken here that the familiarity and disrespect found in joking relationships so obviously do not apply to the actors that these forms of treatment can be used as a signal for proclaiming a state of unseriousness. Serious communication would eventually lead to open hostility, and so joking is seriously necessary in order to keep peace.

[8] For a study of the role of non-competition in the formation of convivial interplay, see Edward Gross, "Informal Relations and the Social Organization of Work in an Industrial Office," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1949).

pike-smoking as a substitute. The length of time taken to cut tobacco, fill, light, and relight a pimple, and the length of time taken on each draw provided welcome pauses between messages. Both sexes often used the fire in open fireplaces as a resting device. The constantly changing shape of the flame apparently expertises a kind of sought-after hypnotism, allowing a person to pause after receiving a message and stare into the fire before answering.

Secondly, a kind of interplay can be maintained by means of organized recreation or games. In general, these systems of interaction allow for the maintenance of accredited participation and a single focus of attention, although the messages involved may not be of the linguistic kind. In the case of games such as whist or billiards, rotation of role of sender, length of messages, number of messages per participant and per interplay, and the general character of messages are all determined and accepted beforehand in terms of the general rules of the game. Each shot or play, within the limited language and logic of the game, is a kind of statement that must be attended to and answered in some way by the other players. On the island, the playing of organized games was extremely common and was to be expected whenever more than eight or nine persons gathered together for convivial interaction. Without rather mechanical means of this kind to organize messages, large parties, or parties with islanders and non-islanders, could be expected to flag and grind to an uneasy halt. Games as a source of messages is a source that never gives out.[9]

[9] Group singing and cooperative participation in work tasks were also widely used as a means of assuring proper ritual relations between those present to each other in a given place. However, these processes do not typically have a distinctive *inter*actional statement-and-reply character and have not been considered in this report.

# *Chapter XVI: On Kinds of Exclusion from Participation*

doi

In Chapter VIII the phrase "in range" was used to describe the position of anyone who was within the zone in which reception of a given impulse was possible. In many cases, all those who are in range of a particular communication are also its accredited recipients.[1] This is true, for example, when two persons stop to talk to each other on an otherwise deserted road or in an otherwise empty room, or when all the persons in a hall are being addressed by a speaker. When all the persons who are in reception range of an interplay are also accredited participants in it, we shall speak of physical closure.

When four or more persons are together in the same bounded region, they may separate off into more than one cluster or grouping, with each cluster maintaining a separate and distinct interplay. If the size of the region is great enough relative to the number of persons in it, it is possible for voices to be modulated downward and for the space of the region to be apportioned so that each interplay in the region is physically closed.[2] This guarantees that no interplay will either be overheard by unaccredited recipients or be a disturbance for other interplays in the region. The same effect is sometimes approximated when the sound intensity of voices is modulated upwards so that the reception of a particular interplay is jammed for all persons not in the interplay. This kind of communication arrangement is found in crowded pubs and bars, and on streets where the noise level is high.

Sometimes, however, physical closure is not possible, and an interplay proceeds on the understanding that persons are in range who are not accredited as participants. Seating arrangements in cafeterias often produce circumstances of this kind. In any case, persons who involuntarily find themselves in range of an interplay convey (by appropriate undirected cues) that they are paying no attention to the message which they are in a position to overhear. As previously suggested, the accredited participants sometimes return the courtesy by censoring their own messages for words that might provide too much

[1] Some cases where this is not true have been touched on in the discussion of indelicate communication chapter vi.

[2] In small interplays physical closure can almost be guaranteed by whispering. In Dixon, as in many other places, however, whispering is considered ill-mannered and does not frequently occur. It constitutes a disturbance for persons in other interplays; it signifies that something is being specifically concealed from them. (This is also true of the use of codes, the spelling-out of messages, and the use of dialect; see the discussion in chapter viii.)

temptation for the outsider or that might cause him offense should he happen to fail to keep his attention withdrawn. Communication arrangements of this kind constitute what might be called "effective closure."[3] Hotel lounges in Bergand very frequently provide the scene for this kind of arrangement. The desire to sit close to the fireplace (this may almost be considered a tropism in Britain) makes it necessary for participants in different interplays to locate themselves close to one another. Conversation is restricted to innocuous general topics, or to domestic ones carried on by brief, affectless allusions that have little meaning except to the accredited participants.

Effective closure is an arrangement by which accredited participants of an interplay can act as if they were not being overheard. In formally organized social occasions, effective closure is sometimes facilitated by use of symbolic boundaries around areas within a region. The roping off of a section of a hall sometimes has this effect. For example, the music for dances held in the Dixon community hall is played on the stage of the hall by accordionists and pianists recruited from the dancers. Once on the stage, the performers talk among themselves with a mood and "ethos" peculiar to them, as if their absolute difference in function and appreciable difference in physical elevation had produced a physical barrier to ordinary communication with the dancers.[4]

Another example is to be found in the primary-grade schoolroom in Dixon. Here groups of pupils of several different stages in schooling must be taught in the same room. While a section in one grouping of seats is being taught something on the board, other sections, in other groupings of seats, act as if they are not in a position to overhear the instructions and questions occurring a short distance away from them. Effective closure is thus maintained, although negative sanctions on the part of the teacher are sometimes required to keep a pupil busy with his own work while instruction is being given to someone else close to him. Sometimes the difference in ethos or climate between different but adjacent sections becomes great. Subjects such as drawing require a certain amount of movement on the part of pupils in order that they may exchange limited equipment among themselves and compare efforts, and discipline during these times is relatively lax. So effective can closure become, however, that half the room can be involved in the relatively relaxed yet humming atmosphere of the drawing period, while the other half of the room can be the scene for lessons which require rather continuous attention to the instructions of the teacher. Interestingly enough, the blackboard (which is about six feet long and four feet high, reversible, and mounted on casters) is frequently used as a symbolic barrier. Pupils at one stage in schooling will be set to do sums on one side of the

[3] Participation in an interplay from which one has been effectively excluded is apparently in some sense a safe thing to handle. An extreme illustration of this is provided by Morris Schwartz, "Social Interaction of a Disturbed Ward of a Hospital," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1951), p. 94, in reference to the conduct of a schizophrenic patient: "... the patient reveals that she is able to focus on others when she is not involved herself and when she feels unobserved in the process. In situations in which this occurs and she discovers she is being observed, she quickly turns her attention inward."

[4] For further illustrations of this kind of behavior among musicians, see Howard S. Becker, "The Professional Dance Musician in Chicago" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1949).

board, and a different group of pupils will be set to copying script written by the teacher on the other side of the board.

It should be noted that effective closure is apparently very difficult to arrange and maintain when the accredited participants enclose among them, ecologically speaking, a person who is not an accredited participants.[5] (In the case of two-person interplay, this area would tend to be reduced to the line of communication between the two accredited participants; an unaccredited participant who intersects this line, blocking the path of vision between the two accredited participants, is almost certain to cause some embarrassment and to feel some.)

We have described two ways in which a person may find himself excluded from an interplay; he may be physically outside its range, or he may be effectively outside its range. A third possibility exists. He may be treated[6] as a non-person, that is, as someone for whom no consideration need be taken. A vivid illustration of this kind of treatment is given by Orwell in his discussion of how patients in a French charity hospital were treated and, reciprocally, how they behaved:

> On the other hand if you had some disease with which the students wanted to familiarize themselves you got plenty of attention of a kind. I myself, with an exceptionally fine specimen of a bronchial rattle, sometimes had as many as a dozen students queuing up to listen to my chest. It was a very queer feeling—queer, I mean, because of their intense interest in learning their job, together with a seeming lack of any perception that the patients were human beings. It is strange to relate, but sometimes as some young student stepped forward to take his turn at manipulating you, he would be actually tremulous with excitement, like a boy who has at last got his hands on some expensive piece of machinery. And then ear after ear—ears of young men, of girls, of Negroes—pressed against your back, relays of fingers solemnly but clumsily tapping, and not from any one of them did you get a word of conversation or a look direct in your face. As a non-paying patient, in the uniform nightshirt, you were primarily a *specimen*, a thing I did not resent but could never quite get used to. . . . About a dozen beds away from me was Numéro 57—I think that was his number—a cirrhosis of the liver case. Everyone in the ward knew him by sight because he was sometimes the subject of a medical lecture. On two afternoons a week the tall, grave doctor would lecture in the ward to a party of students, and on more than one occasion old Numéro 57 was wheeled in on a sort of trolley into the middle of the ward, where the doctor would roll back his nightshirt, dilate with his fingers a huge flabby protuberance on the man's belly—the diseased liver, I suppose—and explain solemnly that this was a disease attributable to alcoholism, commoner in the wine-drinking countries. As usual he neither spoke to his patient nor gave him a smile, a nod or any kind of recognition. While he talked, very grave and upright, he would hold the wasted body beneath his two hands, sometimes giving

[5] An exception may be cited. The interplay conducted in gesture language by the deaf and dumb provides some interesting communication characteristics, and the conventions under which it is conducted differ, apparently, in some ways from spoken interplay. For one thing, clearance interchanges seem to be more difficult to manage, and signs such as tugging at another's arm or clothing seem to be more commonly employed. Furthermore, in regions where there is a high noise level, intimate and easy spoken communication among normal speakers seems to be out of place, and speakers tend to restrict their talk to messages that are strictly required for the action at hand; deaf-mutes, on the other hand, may conduct intimate extended interplay under these circumstances. Also, since their interplays produce no disturbing sounds, and can be understood by few, deaf-mutes seem to feel free to conduct extended intimate conversation in public conveyances such as street-cars, even though the participants may be seated relatively far apart from each other. Presumably such communication neither interferes with spoken communication that might be going on at the time, nor does it force non-participants to listen to messages which they do not wish to hear and for whose reception they have not been accredited.

[6] In the realm of undirected communication, an interesting closure problem arises because of windows. In Dixon, as in many other communities in Western society, one is supposed tactfully not to make use of any opportunity to look into a room by looking into its windows. One is supposed to act as if a physical barrier to sight *completely*, not merely partially, surrounded the room. On occasions where a person does look into a cottage window he usually warns the inhabitants by means of a knock that he is doing so. Apparently one source of hostility to foreign seamen is that they do not obey this communication rule. They are said to wander up to a cottage and gaze into it through the window, doing nothing and saying nothing for minutes at a time, apparently unconcerned with the privacy rights of the inhabitants. Islanders consider this to be uncivilized behavior.

> it a gentle roll to and fro, in just the attitude of a woman handling a rolling-pin. Not that Numéro 57 minded this kind of thing. Obviously he was an old hospital inmate, a regular exhibit at lectures, his liver long since marked down for a bottle in some pathological museum. Utterly uninterested in what was said about him, he would lie with his colorless eyes gazing at nothing, while the doctor showed him off like a piece of antique china.[7]

[7] George Orwell, "How the Poor Die," in *Shooting an Elephant*, p. 22, p. 24.

We are familiar with treatment of a person as virtually absent in many situations. Domestic servants and waitresses, in certain circumstances, are treated as not present and act, ritually speaking, as if they were not present.[8] The young and, increasingly, the very old, may be discussed "to their faces" in the tone we would ordinarily use for a person only if he were not present. Mental patients are often given similar non-person treatment.[9] Finally, there is an increasing number of technical personnel who are given this status (and take the non-person alignment) at formally organized interplays. Here we refer to stenographers, cameramen, reporters, plainclothes guards, and technicians of all kinds.

[8] Bertram Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 19 and p. 39, describes how slaves who were waiting on their master's table would be expected to participate in the table conversation if bidden to, thus giving sudden recognition to the fact that they were expected to follow the conversation, their status being too low to make illicit overhearing a sociological possibility. As non-persons they could also walk into a white church service to give their master a message, without being defined as an interruption. This is seen today in the rule that a "good" personal maid does not rap at a door before entering. Another illustration of non-person treatment of Negroes is given by Mrs. Trollope, *Domestic Mappers of the Americans* (2 vols.; London: Whittaker, Trencher, & Co., 1832), II, 56–57: "I had, indeed, frequent opportunities of observing this habitual indifference to the presence of their slaves. They talk of them, or their condition, of their faculties, of their conduct, exactly as if they were incapable of hearing. I once saw a young lady, who, when seated at table between a male and a female, was induced by her modesty to intrude on the chair of her female neighbor to avoid the indelicacy of touching the elbow of *a man*. I once saw this very young lady lacing her stays with the most perfect composure before a negro footman. A Virginian gentleman told me that ever since he had married, he had been accustomed to have a negro girl sleep in the same chamber with himself and his wife. I asked for what purpose this nocturnal attendance was necessary? 'Good Heaven!' was the reply, 'if I wanted a glass of water during the night, what would become of me.'"

In Dixon, treatment as a non-person occurred in several different kinds of situations. Some examples may be given.

1. There was a rule that the doors of the community hall were to be left open during times when functions were being held in the hall and that anyone who wandered in at these times had a right to stay if he conducted himself "properly." Often, on nights when billiards were being held, foreign fishermen whose boat happened to be anchored in the harbor would walk down to the hall and stay for a while in the billiard room, watching the players. On these occasions, the islanders present in the billiard room would continue with their game and conversation as if the intruders who were present were not present at all. The foreign-speaking visitors would not be nodded to, or spoken to, or even closely looked at. An attempt would be made by the islanders to act as if no constraint or influence had been caused by the presence of the visitors.[10] In fact, of course, players became a little self conscious and demonstrated that they were concerned about intruders by cursing them when they were sighted coming towards the hall or leaving the hall. Such cases seem to suggest that there are two types of non-person treatment, a simple kind that occurs when a person present is excluded from consideration in an automatic, unthinking way because of his low ceremonial status, and a more complex kind that occurs when a person is excluded from consideration as a means by which others present can consciously and concertedly convey their dislike of him. The more complex kind of non-person treatment is sometimes called "the silent treatment" and in some situations constitutes an extremely brutal sanction.

[9] An illustration of non-person treatment is given by Schwartz in his study

2. Household maids, in Dixon, were recruited from the upper reaches of the crofter class to serve in the homes of the gentry and in the hotel. These maids, typically unmarried girls between the ages to fifteen and twenty-five, were usually related in more than one capacity to those whom they served. At ceremonial occasions such as weddings, at community socials, at church, at auction sales, in the shops, servers interacted on a relatively convivial and equalitarian basis with those whom they served. In this sense there were "personal relations" between employer and employee. Thus, when a maid waited on a table in the home of a member of the gentry or in the hotel, those who were waited on would occasionally attempt to bring the maid into the table conversation as an accredited though temporary participant. Occasionally, too, instead of bringing the maid into the conversation, those at table would introduce a momentary lull into their conversation, taking it up after the maid had left the room, or would tactfully limit linguistic messages to the kind that would give the involuntary eavesdropper neither offense nor the feeling that hushed secrets were being kept from her. And of course maids tended to cooperate in maintaining this effective closure by not paying apparent attention to what was being said at table and by not tarrying too long too close to the table.

However it was also very common for gentry and hotel guests to treat those who waited on them as if they were non-persons. In accepting food or allowing plates to be taken away, those being waited upon would often utter a very brief thank-you or extend a small smile to the maid, but no interruption in the table conversation would be produced.[11] Non-interruption was facilitated by the presence of table bells and table buzzers, these allowing persons at the table to summon a maid without having to withdraw even momentarily as sender or recipient in the mealtime conversation. Treatment of the maids as non-persons was apparently facilitated by obliging them to wear black dresses, pennies, dark shoes, and hair nets, this costume apparently making it easier to view the maid in a highly segmental capacity. More important than these factors, perhaps, was the practice of those at table to say things in the presence of maids that were obviously offensive to the groups with which the maids were identified, or to say things of an intimate nature that would ordinarily be kept from the ears of an outsider. For, example, one afternoon at lunch the new doctor said, while a maid was present:

> I wish I knew some psychology, but I don't know if psychology would apply to a preliterate people. They have nothing whatever in their minds. I don't know, they may be queer because of the food and air.

The point here is not that untactful things are said "in front" of maids, but that these offenses may symbolize for the server and for

of the communication conduct of the mentally ill, *op. cit.*, p. 174: "The extent to which patients in Class (1) [socially most withdrawn] become 'non-existent' and 'do not count' in the eyes of other patients is revealed in the following. Mrs. Stillman had, according to her statement, 'something very confidential and important' to reveal to the investigator. She looked around the ward for a place in which she could talk to him alone. It appeared that the living room was empty, and she invited him to talk there. Upon entering it, she discovered Miss Adams sitting and twirling a thread. Mrs. Stillman stopped and said, 'Oh, Ann's in here,' and then carried on ( with a shrug of the shoulder as if to say 'she really doesn't matter') to reveal the confidential matter to the investigator."

[10] A further illustration may be quoted from George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (London: Decker am Warburg, 1949), pp. 180–181: "Once the lodging-house was invaded by a slumming-party. Paddy and I had been out, and, coming back in the afternoon, we heard sounds of music downstairs. We went down to find three gentlepeople, sleekly dressed, holding a religious service in our kitchen. They were a grave and reverend seignior in a frock coat, a lady sitting at a portable harmonium, and a chinless youth toying with a crucifix. It appeared that they had marched in and started to hold the service, without any kind or invitation whatever. It was a pleasure to see how the lodgers met this intrusion. They did not offer the smallest rudeness to the slummers; they just ignored them. By common consent everyone in the kitchen—a hundred men, perhaps—behaved as though the slummers had not existed. There they stood patiently singing and exhorting, and no more notice was taken of them than if they had been earwigs. The gentleman in the frock coat preached a sermon, but not a word of it was audible; it was drowned in the usual din of songs, oaths and the clattering of pans. Men sat at their meals and card games three feet away from the harmonium, peaceably ignoring it. Presently the slummers gave it up and cleared out, not insulted in any way, but merely disregarded. No doubt they consoled themselves by thinking how brave they had been, 'freely venturing into the lowest dens,' etc. etc."

the served that the server is not someone whose feelings, as a person who is present, need be taken into consideration. The maids in Dixon, incidentally, did not seem to be so thoroughly trained to their calling as to accept this role.[12] They tell exemplary tales of times when they have interrupted a dinner conversation and "told a guest what for," shifting their role in this way from non-person to person. As one maid said:

> They say things in front of me as if I'm not there and I don't know whether they mean me to hear or not. Last year the breakfasts were only egg and bread and butter and porridge and once a week bacon and I told them [the hotel owners] what they said about it and now they have three and sometimes four course breakfasts. But some things they say I don't tell anyone, not even Alice [her co-worker and closest friend].

3. When the doctor visited the cottage of a sick crofter, treatment of him varied quite widely. Sometimes he would be treated with great ceremony, sometimes by means of a joking relationship. These kinds of treatment will be considered later. On occasion, however, the difficulty of putting the doctor in a relationship that would permit interaction to continue seemed to be too great, and those in the cottage (except for the sick person) would merely ignore the presence of the doctor. Sometimes, especially if the visit came when a meal was being eaten, and when the fare and the equipment was there for the doctor to see, crofters would be unable to maintain the strategy of ignoring him while proceeding with their own interaction, and would fumble with their food or stop short in eating it, poised in readiness for the doctor's leavetaking.

A similar means of handling a person with whom interaction would be difficult to manage was practiced by workers in the mill, quarry, and loading dock. Sometimes when the boss, Mr. Allen, came on his periodic tours of inspection, and caught them during a moment's break for a brief chat, they would act as if he was not in fact there and would continue, albeit self-consciously, with their talk.

4. During community socials it seemed that children were disciplined and corrected only if they threatened to disrupt radically the adult activity in progress. (This leniency was in line with the general permissiveness which seemed to be shown toward children in Bergand.) During a period when the audience was involved in listening to choral singing, the children between the ages of about four and seven would scamper down the aisles between the rows of seated adults, playing tag. At a moment when an auctioneer was selling objects to adults present, using the stage for his stand, children sometimes "tested the limits" by crawling across the front of the stage. During a dance, children would cut through the dancers in pursuit of

[11] Even this minimal consideration may become subject to question in cases of non-person treatment. For example, at the 1952 political conventions in Chicago, guest speakers were wildly cheered at the moment when they came up to the podium. When in a position to respond to the audience, it was necessary for a technician to slide in past the speakers in order to adjust the microphone through which they were to speak. The question arose as to whether speakers, in the center of world-wide attention, were to withdraw momentarily from their reception of the ovation to acknowledge the technician whose body was brushing past theirs and to thank him for adjusting the microphone to their requirements. Some speakers attempted to treat the technician at least for a second or two as a person; other speakers tried to solve the problem by treating the technician at all times as a non-person. No solution seemed completely to fit the situation.

[12] It may be noted that cab drivers in our society have a similar problem. Two "fares" in the back seat may treat the driver as a non-person and engage in quite intimate conversations and activities. The driver is sometimes left with a feeling that he is somehow not being treated properly.

a balloon or of a friend. In these instances, adults attempted as long as possible to overlook the presence of children who were not paying attention to the action in progress, and while the children no doubt were partly motivated in their actions by a desire to attract adult attention, the children on the whole seemed to express the feeling that it was perfectly proper to be in the midst of organized social interaction and yet not pay attention to it or be treated as persons who ought to pay attention. On occasions such as the Christmas party, however, young children were not allowed to play out the role of non-person and were coaxed into participating in children's games as an official part of the festivity.

# *Chapter XVII: Dual Participation*

doi

In the previous chapter, consideration was given to the ways in which persons may be excluded from an interplay. We now consider ways in which persons who are accredited participants may withdraw from an interplay.

During an interplay it is not uncommon for a participant to move away from the spatial region enclosed by his co-participants and leave the interplay, temporarily or permanently. This kind of departure is a well-designed sign vehicle for conveying a negative valuation of the participants who remain in the interplay. Departure may thus create a sign situation. A participant who wants to leave an interplay therefore tends to wait for a moment that is opportune—a natural break, as it were—so that the expressive implications of his departure will be minimized. He also tends to offer excuses to the remaining participants, so that a natural interpretation can be placed upon his departure. If he leaves momentarily to fix the lights, close the door, or do any or the other minor acts which help to maintain the region in order, he usually shows by his proximity to the disturbance or by his official role (e.g., as host) in these matters, that his momentary departure is not a personal reflection upon the interplay.

Whether a participant departs courteously or openly and flagrantly stalks out of the interplay, the remaining participants are aware of the departure and can openly modify their communication in accordance with this fact. They may, for example, compensate for the offense caused by the departure by making suitably abusive comments about the person who has departed. We may therefore think of departure—whether executed tactfully or not—as conforming to the feed-back model of communication.

There are, however, ways in which a participant can leave an interplay so that the remaining participants may neither recognize this fact openly nor compensate for it effectively. Here we have the case where a participant leaves the interplay but not his ecological position in it. It is a case of withdrawal, not departure.[1] The disaffected participant acts as if he were attending to the accredited messages,

[1] Withdrawal is, in a sense, a form of insufficient involvement, but it is not treated here from that point of view. The question of proper degree of involvement, a crucial problem in its own right, will be considered later.

while at the same time his actual thoughts and attention are elsewhere.

An illustration of how a participant may remain in his ecological position and retain his status as an accredited recipient in an interplay while at the same time withdrawing into imaginary places and imaginary interplays is found in what Bateson and Mead call "away."[2] The participant keeps his face more or less in a position to convey attention signs to the speaker, but his thoughts and eyes turn inward or come to focus on some object in the room. Persons who behave in this way are sometimes said to be day-dreaming, wool-gathering, or to have gone into a brown study. This kind of withdrawal may be rather apparent to the remaining participants, but the obviousness of the withdrawal is apparently compensated for by the fact that no other participant need join the offender in his disaffection.

In Dixon, the practice of going "away" seemed common and was now and then a threat to informal social life. During meal-time conversation, it would be common for someone to withdraw from the interplay and start playing with the cat in an abstracted way, or roll crumbs of bread on the table in a fugue-like manner, or become lost in the latest picture magazine. Almost always these acts of withdrawal seemed to be resented a little by the remaining participants, but, as was typical with communication offenses in Dixon, only young persons were sanctioned in an explicit way for this misbehavior.

A participant may retain his status as an accredited participant and yet at the same time engage in another, typically less inclusive, interplay. This less inclusive interplay he typically carries on by means of signs such as facial gestures and eye-to-eye signals, which can only be received from within a narrow zone, and by means of a lowered voice, which has a short range. By relying on vehicles of this kind, care is taken to offer minimal jamming and disruption of the message that is accredited at the time by the more inclusive interplay. By modulation downward of sign impulses, lip service is given to the inclusive accredited interplay, allowing everyone to maintain the fiction that the privilege of participation has not been treated lightly. Prior and official right is thus given to the inclusive interplay to dominate the situation, as it were. In other words, we may have an accredited or dominant interplay and a subordinate interplay occurring within it. Typically, a subordinate interplay is initiated after the dominant one has begun, and typically the subordinate interplay is terminated before the dominant one has ended.

The formation of a subordinate interplay is commonly a source of tension, perhaps because partial withdrawal of this kind provides

[2] See Bateson and Mead, *op cit.*, pp. 68–69. It is to be noted that while persons can be away with respect to a conversational interplay, they can also be away with respect to more loosely defined interaction systems, such as social occasions. During the community dances, for example , most couples, when they talked at all, allowed their talk to be structured by the ethos of the occasion, using a set pattern of high-spirited small talk concerning the evening. Often, however, a couple could be seen who were going through the motions of the dance but were engaged in talk of a serious kind that removed them, psychologically, from the rest or the dancers. So, too, the musicians, whose contribution set the tone for the moment, would often withdraw into a distant reverie all of their own. Similarly, a person washing dishes as her part of a cooperative work venture would sometimes start to hum in a very quiet way and soon become oblivious to all around her. Pupils in the primary grades seemed especially prone to leave the classroom in this fashion and suddenly begin to leaf through a reader or twist and untwist the strap of a schoolbag in an abstracted manner.

such a ready way of expressing some kind of disrespect for the dominant interplay or for the person who is at the time the accredited sender in the dominant interplay. Subordinate interplays vary, it seems, in an important way according to the degree to which excluded participants of the dominant interplay resent or accept the smaller interplay from which they are excluded.

There are many kinds of subordinate interplay that cause little or no offense to excluded persons who are accredited participants of the dominant interplay. Frequently factors in the situation will make it obvious that the partial withdrawal of those in the subordinate interplay is clearly not an expression of disregard for the dominant interplay. For example, during a formally organized social occasion, it is sometimes necessary for the chairman or other officials to enter briefly into a huddle with one or two other persons in order to straighten out administrative details that may have become tangled. In such cases no attempt needs to be made to conceal the fact that a subordinate interplay is in progress; respect is shown to the dominant interplay by making the subordinate one as brief, as quiet, and as affectless as possible. Similarly, during such occasions as committee meetings, it is not uncommon for adjacent participants who are somewhat removed from the speaker to lean over towards each other and carry on a brief muted conversation; this sort of withdrawal causes little offense, especially if it can be felt by others that the messages conveyed in the subordinate interplay involve a "take" to the dominant message, and a take that could be given an official hearing without thereby disrupting the working acceptance.

Those who maintain an inoffensive subordinate interplay must attempt to minimize the interference which they cause, but they need not attempt to conceal the fact that they are engaged in a subordinate interplay. There are many cases, however, where toleration of subordinate interplays is not very high. The situation may, for instance, offer no happy pretext which excluded participants can employ as evidence of the fact that no disrespect is being shown. The rule that attention must be paid to the accredited sender may be strictly drawn. The content of the subordinate interplay may appear to be—were it suddenly given an official hearing—quite inconsistent with the maintenance of a working acceptance. In these and other circumstances, subordinate interplays may be declared illegal, as it were, and have to go underground. Thus, just as subordinate interplays vary in the degree to which they are inoffensive, they also vary in the degree to which those who maintain them attempt to conceal that this is the case and attempt to communicate with one another in a surreptitious, furtive, and underhanded way.[3]

Subordinate interplays that are carried out in a quite furtive way provide an interesting subject matter for study. Sometimes it is possible for a small number of persons to carry on this kind of conduct because they happen to be outside the visual line of the speaker or of those who are more or less responsible for seeing that order is maintained.[4] Sometimes participants of subordinate interplays can feign the sort of expression they would have if they were indulging in an inoffensive subordinate interplay and at the same time convey surreptitious messages which are quite inconsistent with the working acceptance of the dominant interplay. Sometimes this improper communication behavior is carried on by means of "cant," a system of signals which mean one thing to the initiate and another to outsiders.[5] Usually, however, the offenders mange to conceal their offensive behavior by reducing the whole subordinate interplay to a quick glance or a "significant" expression of the eyes. A wink is perhaps the standard gesture for stabilizing this relationship. In any case, those who participate in the furtive interchange enter into collusion with each other and express a common, and usually negative, attitude toward the dominant interplay or toward certain participants in it.[6]

An illustration of how subtle the cues which establish a furtive interplay can be may be found in the auctions in Dixon:

> Household furnishings have a relatively high second-hand value in Dixon because the freight charges from Britain to the island are very high. The auction sales that are held about once every two months are therefore important occasions. A person who bids at these auctions runs the risk of showing his neighbors how much money he has. A bidder also runs the risk of openly competing with someone who is a relative, neighbor, or friend. There is a tendency (which may be found in auctions anywhere) for the bidder to signal to the auctioneer by means of unobtrusive signs, so that in many cases it is impossible for anyone but the auctioneer to tell who has raised the bid. Even the auctioneer frequently makes mistakes, and persons are sold things that they did not think they had placed a bid upon. Signals such as taking one's left hand halfway out of one's pocket are used to convey bids. In general, however, the bidder relies upon catching the eye of the auctioneer and giving him an extremely noncommittal look. It is understandable that there are widely current jokes in Dixon concerning the danger of so much as looking in the direction of the auctioneer during an auction.

In Dixon, during informal conversation, it was very common tor a furtive interplay to occur as a means by which two or more persons could express an impermissible attitude toward another person who was present.[7] Sometimes the collusive evaluation was a positive or favorable one. Thus, when children between the ages of six and about twelve were drawn into adult conversation and behaved in

[3] For completeness, a minor communication arrangement must be mentioned. Sometimes a recipient will convey a furtive statement and make a careful attempt to ensure that many of those present will overhear what he has said and that he has said it furtively. The obligation of the accredited sender to overlook all subordinate interplay is thus more or less consciously exploited and played with. We sometimes employ the term "stage whisper" to refer to this communication aggression. Of course, the accredited speaker can turn the tables and force the person who is playing at whispering to send his message in an official way.

[4] A crude example of this is to be found in the primary schoolrooms in Dixon, where pupils will hold a book up between their faces and the teacher in an attempt to conceal from the teacher the fact that "talking" is going on. Sometimes a pupil will grimace at his teacher, when he cannot be seen by the teacher, apparently content with establishing a collusive relationship with himself. Adults in Dixon seemed to have learned that collusion should occur with someone, not merely with oneself.

[5] The "shill" or confederate operates in this way. Collusion during divorce trials, where the plaintiff and defendant convey a permissible discord to the judge in order to settle an impermissible one is another case in point.

[6] An interesting limiting case is found in what might be called "double-talk." By means of this communication arrangement, persons engage an innocuous conversation but phrase their messages in such a way as to convey information about topics which they have no right to discuss together. Double-talk typically occurs in communication between a superordinate and a subordinate upon matters which are officially outside of the competence or jurisdiction of the subordinate but which are actually dependent upon him. It is a device by which the subordinate can lead the superordinate without putting into jeopardy the status difference between them. Armies and jails apparently abound in double-talk. It is also found in communications pertaining to questions of law. Double-talk permits two persons to make an illicit agreement with each other without putting one participant in the vulnerable position of admitting this fact to the other. Police

a charming way, the adults would frequently convey to each other a very warm approval of the young performer. Usually, however, collusive interplays directed against a person present seemed to be a way of punishing the person for having behaved in a foolish manner or a way of correcting for the injury he had done to the sentiments possessed by the other participants concerning how they ought to be treated or how a person ought to behave. Thus, when the hotel managers were more strict than the help thought was warranted, the help used sometimes to stick their tongues out at their employers so that all but the target of the aggression could see.[8] Similarly, in the kitchen, when someone got too excited, or too greedy, or too vain, the others present would glance at each other with just a faint amount of derision sparking in their eyes. So also, during billiards, if one player got too much caught up in the game, either taking too much pleasure in a good shot or showing too much anger at missing a shot, the others present would often enter into a collusive relationship against him.

On the island, the presence of a member of the gentry was always an opportunity for islanders to enter into collusive communication. Thus, when Mr. Allen would come to the pier to check up on the rate of work and to talk to the foreman, a worker located behind Mr. Allen's back would sometimes make profanizing gestures. On one occasion, a worker took up an empty bag of lime and whirled it about his head, testing the limits to which derogatory action could be carried on behind the back of the boss without the boss seeing it. Interestingly enough, when one person made an effort to tease a second person by making claims that were literally false, the teaser would sometimes enter into collusion with the remaining persons, in part, apparently, as a means of guaranteeing that at least someone would know that it was a joke all along. Here the teaser seemed to employ furtive interplay as a safety measure, to ensure that later he could establish that he was joking, not lying. This kind of collusion was frequently established by making an exaggerated mouth gesture from a position in the room where all but the person teased could observe it. This of course also guaranteed that no one would give the joke away.

Some further illustrations follow.

> The hotel managers, the Tates, and a few guests are standing in the hall leading to the scullery. The cook faces them and participates eagerly and politely in their conversation. The scullery boy, who is behind the cook and concealed from the others, gooses the cook, who must keep a straight face.

> Mr. Tate is feeding the cat while he and the others in the kitchen are eating dinner. Mrs. Tate watches him and expresses a clear look of

bribery, for example, is usually regulated through an etiquette which allows each person to act as if no bribe had been made or none had been uttered. The point of interest here is that all the persons in the dominant interplay are also in the furtive one. In double-talk there is no third person. The roles taken by persons in the furtive interplay are a slight upon the roles taken by the *same* persons in the dominant interplay.

[7] In mediated communication arrangements, the temptation to enter into collusive interplays is great, partly because it can be so easily managed. When person A is in the presence of person B and interrupts their interplay to talk over the telephone to person C, or to read a letter from person C, then some collusive action of A and B against C almost invariably occurs. Thus, when the maid answered the hotel telephone and told the person calling that Mrs. Tate was a distance away and could not conveniently come to the phone, there would be a collusive smile between the maid and the hotel guests sitting near the phone.

[8] Children in the Dixon schools employed the same device against their teachers when the teacher's back was turned, but in some of these cases it appeared as if the pupil was mainly concerned with expressing to himself a spirit of defiance. Here again, collusion seemed to be with oneself.

affection which she seems to have been practicing up. One of the maids, who thinks it is improper for a cat to be fed at the table and for Mrs. Tate to show affected affection, openly grimaces at both of them, knowing that for a moment they will not be able to see her but that the others at the table will.

Mrs., Tate is talking to a friend about the possibility of buying his cottage. A maid comes in whose boy friend is also interested in buying it. Mrs. Tate conveys by her eyes that the person is supposed to act as if something else had been under discussion. He does.

A customer in Allen's shop asks the clerk for a three volt flashlight bulb. The clerk says that they only have 2.3 but suggests it be tried. It immediately burns out. Customer then asks manager for a three volt bulb. The manager says they only have 2.3, and it wouldn't do to try it. The clerk casts the customer a knowing smile. Customer and clerk say nothing.

At a crofter's house party a visiting piano tuner from Capital City tries to monopolize the evening and suggests that there should be a round of story telling with each person telling one. Two guests shoot each other a collusive, "Holy Christ!" look.

A player at billiards makes a bad shot and gets over-involved; he swears. Others present cast each other snickering looks.

At progressive whist, a new player mistakenly shuffles cards at the end of a hand. Two of the remaining three players cast him a friendly smile, suggesting that a trick has been played on the game but that they will neither tell nor take it seriously.

A quarry team of seven is building a garage; four of them are digging the pit. The job of one is to scoop out water. Instead of getting into the pit he leans over slowly and tries to lift the water out. The man in the pit looks at another outside the pit as if to say, "Do you see what this fellow asks to be done for him?"

# Part Five

## *Conduct During Interplay*

# *Chapter XVIII: Introduction: Euphoric and Dysphoric Interplay*

doi

When persons are in each other's presence, it is possible that no one will be made to feel ill at ease, out of countenance, nonplussed, self-conscious, embarrassed, or out of place because of the sheer presence of the others or because of the actions of the others. No one will have the feeling that there is a false note in the situation. When these conditions are present, we may say that the interaction is euphoric. To the degree that those present have been made to feel ill at ease, we may say that the interaction is dysphoric.[1] In this study we are concerned with euphoric and dysphoric interaction only in cases where those present to each other are *also* involved in accredited directed communication with one another, i.e., in interplay. (It is to be clearly understood that many interesting false notes arise among persons who are engaged only in undirected communication with each other.)

In Dixon, the specific requirements for euphoric interplay seem to be very subtle and complex. So delicate a balance seems to be required of factors potentially opposed to each other that it is a wonder any interplay at all is completely euphoric.[2]

When persons engage in interplay (as in any other activity) there is a tendency for them to become unselfconsciously, spontaneously, and unthinkingly immersed or involved in the proceedings. During any particular interplay, norms seem to prevail which indicate the degree to which participants ought to immerse themselves or forget themselves in the interaction.[3] It would seem that in Dixon the most general requirement of euphoric interaction is that no participant act in such a way as to disturb or disrupt a proper degree of involvement on the part of the other participants. This generalization does not answer the question of what makes for euphoric and dysphoric interaction, but only moves the question one step back, for we must go on to ask what sorts of behavior on the part of one participant throw the other participants off balance and make it difficult for them to involve themselves spontaneously in the interplay in the way required of them.

[1] The terms *euphoria* and *dysphoria* have been employed by students of preliterate societies to refer to social systems that are functioning well or functioning badly.

[2] In contrast, observation suggests that euphoric interaction is quite common in situations where persons present to one another are not engaged in interplay nor feel obliged to be. In Dixon it seemed easy for persons to fulfill unselfconsciously expectations regarding proper clothing, proper modulation of voice and gestures, and other requirements of public seemliness and decorum.

[3] It has become common to consider interpersonal communication as that which occurs when two persons each take the probable response of the other into consideration. This view seems to be implied in G. H. Mead and to have been carefully elaborated into a model of feints and strategies and infinite tactical maneuvers by von Neumann. It overlooks the crucial fact that a sender

Until now in this study, interplay has been considered from a rather mechanical point of view. It has been suggested that orderly interplay seems, in Dixon, to have certain functional characteristics: warning must be given as to when the interplay is to start, when it is to end, and who is to be officially included in it; during the interplay, a supply of messages must be assured, interruption must be controlled and regulated, and a transition from one sender to another must be effected; a center of focus must be maintained. When these arrangements did not prevail, dysphoria tended to occur. However, these requirements seemed to be necessary but not sufficient grounds for euphoric interaction. Interplay was often conducted in a perfectly orderly way and was nevertheless dysphoric.

It is sometimes felt that euphoric interplay is interaction in which participants are made to feel happy or pleased, and that dysphoric interplay is interaction in which participants are made to feel deprived. This is by no means always the case. Apparently deprivations can be conveyed to participants in a way which leaves them saddened but does not disrupt the euphoria of the interaction; indulgences can be conveyed in a way which leaves participants happy but embarrassed. Gaiety and lightheartedness can prevail in an awkward situation, and anger and hostility can prevail in euphoric conversation.

In the chapters that follow, no assumption is made that a complete, or satisfactory, or systematic analysis of euphoria and dysphoria in interplay has been given. The problem will be approached from different points of view, some of which overlap and some of which have very little relation to each other. As many different approaches will be attempted as the data seem to call for.

is committed to the expressive component of his communication, this tending to be, in a sense, more of an impulsive response to the situation than a calculated and tactical adjustment to it. By expressing himself spontaneously, the sender becomes intimately a part of the situation, instead of merely a rational manipulator of it. In a manner of speaking, the character of the sender becomes lodged in and infused into his communicative acts, giving these acts a weight and a reality in their own right. To the extent that actors can control their behavior in accordance with tactical utility, communication can conveniently be seen as a type of abstract rational game—a game that can be played at a distance, in any convenient context, at any convenient time, and by means of any convenient set of symbols for denoting individual moves. To the extent that actors cannot prevent themselves from conveying their feelings on a matter (or do not attempt to do so), interpersonal communication can conveniently be seen as part of a unique concrete situation, each message inseparably part of the context in which it occurs. It would seem that the unthinking impulsive aspect of interaction is not a residual category that can be appended as a qualification to a rational model of communication; the spontaneous unthinking aspect of interaction is a crucial element of interaction.

# *Chapter XIX: Involvement*

doi

It has been suggested that euphoric interplay occurs when no participant is dislodged, as it were, from a proper degree of unselfconscious immersion in the interplay. This, of course, assumes that the participants are involved in the first place, that is, that they have to a degree cut themselves off from all things external to the interplay—that they have mobilized themselves for the interplay and have been carried away by it.

In stating that participants of any euphoric interplay must become caught up in the interplay, it must be clearly added that the required level of involvement varies from interplay to interplay. Thus, when a housewife in Dixon is going about her daily domestic tasks in the presence of her immediate family, it is possible for her to flit in and out of euphoric interplay while practically all her attention and interest is patently accorded to the pots on the stove or the bannocks in the oven. Were she talking to the gentry or the minister, however, such casual involvement would be considered an affront, and a more focussed orientation to the conversation would be required.

Further, it is apparent that level of proper involvement varies from role to role within a particular interplay. For example, at political meetings in Dixon, it is permissible for women to knit and men to smoke while a speech is being given, but it is not permissible for the speaker to distract himself in these ways.[1] Furthermore, the level of involvement, like the level of tension and "excitement," also varies from one point in the interplay to another, perhaps starting at a rather low pitch, building up to a crescendo, and then gradually falling away in preparation for the termination of the interaction. Thus there is a sense in which every interplay is characterized by an involvement contour. In spite of these variations, however, involvement levels for a given interplay come to be standardized in the sense that anyone who maintains a degree of involvement that departs from the expected is felt to have committed an offense and is likely to disrupt the involvement of others.

[1] It may be noted that the place of knitting as a permissible limitation of involvement has recently undergone rapid change in urban centers of Western society (perhaps because of the war) and is in many situations a matter of doubt. For example, some American college professors permit female students to knit in class, some do not. Smoking seems similarly a matter of doubt in some situations. In Dixon knitting and smoking seem to be permissible at a very wide range of social occasions.

In Dixon it seemed that persons who had had much experience with each other and who knew what to expect of each other could tolerate appreciable deviations from the involvement norm without becoming improperly involved themselves. Improper involvement that was predictable tended to be less disruptive than unanticipated improprieties. On the other hand, interaction with strangers, however brief and well-structured, tended to be dysphoric.

The factor of involvement suggests an interesting contrast between large formally organized recreation, such as a social, and small convivial interplay among a few persons. In the first type, boredom is not rare; in fact it is sometimes so general in the audience that it is necessary to say that the social occasion is at fault and not the participants. On the other hand, an uninvolved recipient can easily be overlooked amidst the many other participants and a feigned expression of interest is not, in Dixon, at least, considered an offense at these large occasions. In the second type—small informal interplay—boredom when present is more visible, more of an offense, and less permissibly concealed by feigning interest. On the other hand, the interest of the recipient is continuously revived by the opportunity he has of himself taking the floor. In Dixon, as apparently in other subcultures of our society, few persons can consistently forego the opportunity that small interplay presents to engineer a favorable image of themselves and to uphold their own convictions; in exercising these opportunities, their flagging interest and involvement is revived.

The requirement that persons be impulsively involved in interplay in which they participate is borne out by a very significant rule, namely that interplay must not be staged or worked out beforehand. In Dixon, when about to tell a joke, or an anecdote, or a piece of news, the speaker would first inquire if the story was known, and, if he had already told the story to some of those present, he would preface the story by excusing himself to them. Similarly, singers who regularly appeared at concerts would attempt to have at least one new song for the occasion, showing that their behavior was not a mechanical repetition of previous activity. The Program Committees of socials were obliged to search for new games for the same reason. Special occasions and special food—events which could not easily be duplicated—also served as an expression of the uniqueness of the situation and would lend euphoria to it. The game of "500" was widely praised, and felt to be superior to whist, because in "500" unique problems were likely to occur.

On the island, there seemed to be two somewhat different ways in which insufficient involvement was expressed. These will be considered separately.

1. One kind of insufficient involvement occurred when participants expressed too little concern for the topic of conversation and what was being said about it. Lack of concern seemed itself to be conveyed in two ways. First, the unconcerned participant might act with coolness, indifference, or pointed interest in events unrelated to the interplay. Secondly, the unconcerned participant could insist on taking in a joking way what others in the interplay had meant to be taken seriously, or insist on taking seriously what others had meant to be taken unseriously. In either case, the disaffected participant would give the impression that the issues of the interplay were not the sorts of things that could embroil him or even touch him. By holding himself apart from the communication in this way, he was able to convey the self-image of someone who did not think it worth while to convey his self-image at that particular time. Unconcern often conveyed an invidious judgment of those participants who apparently did consider the interplay important enough to warrant involvement.

On the island, children were explicitly taught that they must "take" or "show" an interest in any interaction of which they were accredited participants. Perhaps youths became social adults at the point where it was no longer deemed fitting explicitly to enjoin them to show interest when involved in interplay, although their obligation would be indirectly impressed upon them.

In any case, islanders very generally practiced the courtesy of evincing involvement in interactional proceedings, whether or not they were actually involved. The lengths to which this kind of tact can be carried ought perhaps to be suggested.

> During birthday parties, for which up to about fifteen people gather in a crofter's cottage (more could hardly be gotten in), it is customary for organized parlor games to be played. In the main, these games consist of putting persons in embarrassing situations. At one party, at which there were fourteen persons, the mother of the man who was celebrating his birthday hit upon the "pig game." In this game, one person at a time is brought into the room where those "in the know" are assembled and is told he is going to see a pig. A cloth is taken away from what is a mirror and the person sees himself. Since the sponsor of the game could not be discouraged, the game was played, although all those present knew its secret and thought it not a funny game. The assembled group went through the process of playing the game on four or five persons. During the twenty minutes that this required, each successive "butt" of the joke put on an act of surprise at seeing himself in the mirror, and each time the audience put on an act of finding this funny. Everyone present tactfully adhered to the involvement form for games of that type, although no one present was caught up in the game spontaneously.

> During the annual Christmas social games are staged for the very young as well as for adults. In one game, called "Oxford and Cambridge," two lines of players race in relay against each other. A young man of twenty-five in one line found himself running against a six-year-old girl. He pretended to be straining as hard as he could but actually managed only to keep pace with his young competitor. His attempt to be considerate of the girl was conveyed to everyone but at the cost of showing that he was not really involved in the race.
>
> In Dixon, progressive whist is played as the first part of many socials. Tables and benches are placed around the ball in a continuous circle, and up to forty sets of four persons play the game. After each hand the winning men go in one direction and the winning women go in the other, thereby making it possible for many of those present to play with each other. Apparently by playing with many partners, social ties are reaffirmed. At the end of each game individual scores are recorded on individual cards, and at the end of twenty-four games each player adds up his total score. Prizes are given for men's highest score, women' s highest score, and lowest score. During the last few games, interest reaches a relatively high pitch, for at this time players with high or low scores see the possibility of a prize realized or destroyed. At the end and climax of the round of games, when prizes are awarded, some tension is released by spontaneous clapping, and by cheering for the winners. It is very widely known in the community that two elderly women cheat in recording their scores, ensuring either a very high or a very low score. They are known to be only average players, and yet one of them almost always wins a prize at every whist social. Presumably they are interested in acquiring the prizes or in the moment of acclaim that comes with winning one. In any case they "spoil" the game for the others. Some players feel it is useless to get involved in playing well, knowing that simple cheating will obtain a higher score; other players explicitly state that they have mixed feelings about the possibility of winning, because if they win (especially two evenings in a row) others might think it has been by cheating. In any event, many participants are thrown off a little by the realization that two players are acting out ordinary involvement in the play and yet are involved in quite another way. And yet when either of the two known cheaters wins, everyone makes an effort to show enthusiasm and greets the award of a prize to her by proper clapping.

2. Lack of concern in the proceedings has been suggested as one type of insufficient involvement; another type is to be found when a participant shows too much concern with his own relation to the proceedings. The participant may be amply involved in the interplay but i sufficiently forgetful of his presence in it. Two varieties of undue self-concern may be suggested.

First, the actor may give the impression of being too much concerned with the fact that it is he who is sending or receiving the message. He may give the impression that participation is grounds for such anxiety that he withdraws from spontaneous communication

with others, in a kind of startle response, blotting out all concerns with worry about himself. We call this self-consciousness.[2] We detect it in others by a characteristic look in their eyes and by characteristic fumbling behavior on their part. When we detect it in others, the lack of ease which it implies is likely to be transferred to us in the form of embarrassment.[3]

It may be noted that when a crofter and a member of the gentry engaged in interaction, the crofter, especially, was likely to become self-conscious. A meeting on neutral ground—as at an auction—was not so likely to be dysphoric, but a meeting on either's home territory—as in the house of either—almost always resulted in self-consciousness.

There were times in crofting circles when unselfconscious involvement was difficult for persons to achieve. When an individual suddenly found himself in a position where much could apparently be lost or gained by the nature of his behavior, or where he was the center of many persons' attention, as when someone unused to performing performed at a community social, then the individual found it difficult to remain unselfconscious. Women of almost any age found it difficult to sustain an explicit compliment with equanimity and would sometimes turn away on these occasions, cast their heads down modestly, or rush at their "tormentor" with arms flailing, in a joking effort to disrupt the interchange.

It is also interesting to note that persons under the age of about sixteen (and the younger they were, the more this was true) found it difficult to interact with anyone outside of the immediate family without becoming acutely selfconscious. Frequently these persons would feel impelled literally to hide their faces so that their embarrassment could not be seen. However, the more likely a person was to act in this way, the more likely it was, on the whole, for him to be defined as a not-yet-person whose embarrassment was not an important enough thing to embarrass the interaction in which it occurred.

There is a second variety of undue self-concern during interplay: the actor may give the impression of being too much concerned with the effects his message is having upon the recipients or the effects his reception of the message is having upon the sender. Other participants come to this conclusion because they feel the actor is attempting to employ expressive behavior in a calculated way, and presumably no one would do this unless they were more interested than is proper in determining the response of others. We call this affectation. In Cooley's words, the individual "... seems to be unduly preoccupied with what other people think..." of him; affectation, he says, "... exists when the passion to influence others seems to

[2] Self-consciousness, of course, is also found in situations where only undirected communication prevails. While walking, persons in Dixon are supposed to remain relatively unaware of their actions and more or less forget about the presence of their bodies. Under some circumstances, as when persons of high status unexpectedly appear, an individual may become selfconscious; his face may get red and he may feel that his walk has become patently stiff and unnatural.

[3] As a qualification it should perhaps be added that there are some interplays wherein a participant of extremely subordinate status is expected to show some selfconsciousness and causes offense if he is too much at ease.

overbalance the established character and give it an obvious twist or pose."[4]

> Thus there are persons who in the simplest conversation do not seem to forget themselves, and enter frankly and disinterestedly into the subject, but are felt to be always preoccupied with the thought of the impression they are making, imagining praise or depreciation, and usually posing a little to avoid the one or gain the other.[5]

[4] Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner's, 1922), p. 196.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

It may be noted that Berganders are restrained in regard to expressive behavior and find it difficult to believe that the volatile expressiveness of some outsiders is, for the outsiders, a natural and spontaneous thing. Instead, Berganders tend to feel that a show of expression must be something introduced for a calculated purpose and that the actor is therefore insincere and something of a poseur. This may partly explain why many Berganders feel that most outsiders are either false or foolish, or both.

* * * * *

The islanders have access to many strategies for ensuring sufficient involvement of participants. Some are suggested below.

One widely employed technique seemed to be to make use of tension developed outside of the actual interplay and to offer a measured resolution of that tension. Since almost everyone usually felt himself to be a little hungry and concerned about this fact, the serving of food, especially "nice" food, was always a way of obtaining the requisite distraction. The use of card-games and other games of chance seemed to operate in a similar way, introducing a state to tension and a resolution of it. The very common practice of members of a family trying out on each other every competitive puzzle or game that was found in magazines and newspapers may also be mentioned in this context. At community socials, games such as "Oxford and Cambridge," musical chairs, "Beetle," guess-the-weight competitions, raffles, etc., seamed to play a similar role. In terms of the dynamics of a social occasion, these devices seem to be a kind of "safe supply." So, too, the alteration of persons' relationship to each other, whether sexual or social, effected by co-participation, served as a source of involvement. In all these cases, involvement in the interaction seemed to be a carry-over or transfer from involvement in events occurring in the midst of the interactants. These events seemed to serve to distract persons away from feelings of either selfconsciousness or unconcern. Alcoholic beverages, brewed in many households on the island and commonly served at convivial social occasions, seemed to play the same role, but perhaps in a more direct way.

A final factor in involvement must be mentioned. It has been suggested that individuals may be viewed as sacred objects: they can be offended or pleased by the expressive significance of events which occur in their presence. Every event that occurs in the presence of a person can have or be given the capacity to confirm or discredit the image he has of himself and the image others have of him.

In Dixon, if the events during an interplay convey to a participant a judgment of him that has not been taken for granted or built up in the interplay, he tends to lose his poise and become embarrassed. This crucial fact will be considered at length in a later chapter. In order to prevent interactional dysphoria, participants attempt to guide their conduct in such a way as not to express an inappropriate judgment of themselves or others. Paradoxically, however, if they succeed in being completely tactful, often the interplay will become stale and flat, and the participants will find less and less cause for involvement in it.

If rules of tact are followed, often boredom sets in. If rules of tact are broken, often embarrassment sets in. Apparently a fundamental source of involvement consists of the slight infraction of tactful rules; either the infraction is committed in an unserious way or care is taken to bend the rule but not break it. This source of involvement will be illustrated in Chapter XXII.

# *Chapter XX: Faulty Persons*

doi

It has been suggested that when all the participants in an interplay are sufficiently "caught up" or spontaneously involved in the proceedings, the interaction may be characterized as euphoric. To the degree that participants fail to become sufficiently involved, because of too little concern with the proceedings or too much self-concern with them, the interaction may be said to be dysphoric. The perception by one participant that another is insufficiently involved or that (as will be considered later) he is too much involved, may itself serve to make the perceiver feel ill at ease and must be considered along with the the other factors that can make a participant lose his spontaneous involvement in an interplay. So too, the perception by yet another participant that someone has perceived an offender may throw this second perceiver out of tune with the interaction. In these cases embarrassment seems to be a contagious and regenerative thing, feeding on itself, spreading from one participant to another, and from him to still others, in ever widening circles of discomfiture.

There are interplays which seem to be destined from the beginning to be dysphoric, so that persons who usually find themselves at ease in the presence of others feel out of countenance. Thus, when five or six men went with a lorry to their old schoolhouse to borrow a piano for a community concert, the presence of little desks and all the rest of the schoolroom paraphernalia to which they had been tied thirty years ago seemed to reinvade their earlier selves to such a degree that their present ones could not be maintained with equanimity. So, too, when the time came for male lambs to "lose it," as the islanders say, the presence of heaps of testicles and the necessity of holding squirming heavy lambs while castration occurred would make it difficult for workers to suppress a sexual definition of the situation, and the usual quiet work self would be disrupted by a much more bawdy one. Similarly, when a crew of men unloaded lumber which they knew had been ordered by the undertaker and was destined for coffins, it became difficult for them to suppress thoughts of their relation to eternity and to concentrate on merely being workers. At

all of these times the disruption of one's ordinary workaday self would be resolved by defining the whole situation in a joking way. At such times, participants felt that no one was responsible for the disturbance; the situation itself was felt to be responsible.

There are also occasions in which a particular person found himself playing a role that was difficult to carry off with equanimity, regardless of the poise he might have. Thus when persons are invited to weddings, either both members of a courting couple are invited or neither, since a wedding is an occasion for young guests to advertise their "intentions," a ceremony of couples walking from the church to the community hall making this explicit. There is an overriding rule, however, obliging siblings of the couple being married to sit at the ceremonial head table. Thus a brother of the bride or groom who is himself betrothed must arrange for someone to take his girl to the wedding. The person chosen finds himself in a contradictory position which he usually resolves by taking the situation unseriously.

There also seem to be certain kinds of interplay which a given person cannot handle with equanimity, although other participants do not find the same difficult and he himself is at ease in other interactions. And in any person's daily round of interplays, there are likely to be one or two individuals in whose presence he alone cannot be at ease—individuals who appear to him to be affected, or presumptuous, or insolent, or obsequious, to a degree that cannot quite be tolerated.

Our concern here, however, is that in any community there seem to be some individuals who bring offense and dysphoria to almost every interplay in which they participate, causing others to feel ill at ease whether or not the offenders themselves are embarrassed. As suggested in Chapter II, these offenders may be called faulty persons.

It is to be noted that persons who bring difficulty to many of the interactions in which they participate tend to find themselves shunned, or, if not shunned, treated in a very special way. This treatment need not be the result of organized community reaction but may be the unwitting consequence of the independent and often unthinking action of members of the community. It is to be noted further that the unsatisfactory handling of one's role in interplay is not a measure of the way in which one handles undirected communication or tasks unrelated to interaction. In Dixon, many quite faulty persons carried on the roles of parent, husband, community member, and croft worker in what was widely felt to be a very adequate way.

Perhaps the most obvious kind of faulty person is he who lacks adequate command over the linguistic skills necessary for carrying on linguistic communication in the given community. Ordinarily we assume that three types of persons may lack this qualification: there

are young children, who do not yet have the capacity to carry on a conversation; there are foreigners and outsiders who cannot manage a specific set of linguistic symbols, although they can, of course, manage other sets; there are defectives who do not have the intellectual capacity for communication or who have defective communication equipment, as in the case of the deaf, the dumb, and the blind. Defectives and foreigners, especially, qualify as faulty persons because, unlike children, the immediate response they call forth is an expectation that they will be able to interact in an adequate manner. The few households in Dixon where idiots lived seemed to be under a kind of interaction cloud; few persons not members of these households seemed to enter without first steeling themselves for the awkwardness that was to be anticipated.

Among commoners in Dixon, informal conversation is carried on solely in the community's variations of the Bergand dialect. The dialect is hardly intelligible to outsiders, and to them a Bergand version of standard English is used. Almost all commoners in Dixon feel constrained in situations where it is necessary for them to use standard English, tending to lapse back into the dialect as soon as relaxation is possible. Crofters can carry on official meetings in standard English, or make speeches in it, but for informal conversation they find it inappropriate and often impossible. Britons who come to the island for a visit or who come to stay for a time for reasons of business cannot help but disturb informal interaction in which they participate. They cannot help but jar and distract their island listeners a little when they talk; they cannot help "missing," or not catching in time, many of the truncated dialect ejaculations and introjections which form an important part of informal discourse. Statements have to be translated and repeated for them. While there are often additional reasons why outsiders cannot be absorbed into euphoric intimate interplay, lack of familiarity with the dialect is frequently sufficient to make these persons faulty.

Another kind of faulty person is to be understood in terms of the fact that individuals apparently make certain broad assumptions as to standards of physiognomic normality that all persons ought to satisfy. If the appearance of an individual departs too much from expected body form (especially in directions that are valued negatively) then other persons may be continuously distracted and diverted by the image that is presented to them. It becomes difficult for recipients to disinvolve themselves from the individual's offensive undirected communication, and they therefore find it difficult to involve themselves spontaneously in his directed communication. Few persons are sufficiently misshapen in an overall way to become faulty persons for this reason. There is, however, a significant number of persons

who have minor physical defects associated directly with their chief instruments of communication—the eyes, the lips, the voice, and the face. Tics, bare-lips, cleft palates are examples; "bad breath" is another. Such defects are, as it were, always before the eyes, ears, and nose of the recipient, causing him as much distraction as would a far greater defect less crucially located.[1] The recipient is put in the difficult position of having to direct his attention away from the sender's defects in order to avoid offending the sender and to lessen the possibility of involvement in the wrong stream of signs, while at the same time he must direct his attention to just those areas in order to show the sender that he is attending to him.

[1] Physical peculiarities are the usual but not the only types of disturbances. For example, Western people who have little experience with Hindu society often find difficulty in talking to Sikhs who wear turbans. Attention tends to waver from the race or the speaker to his head-dress.

On the island there are some persons whose faces are not, by Western standards, pleasant to look at. There is a tendency for these persons to keep silent and to keep out of the view of the sender in an interplay, except among members of their immediate family. They are thought of as "shy" and seem to content themselves with less social interaction than do others. In a sense they have sacrificed themselves (for whatever reason) to the euphoria of interaction, voluntarily withdrawing from positions in which they might afford disturbance to the interplay.

Persons with defects of this kind did not, of course, always retreat. A person seemed less likely to do so when he could feel that his defect was a superimposed characteristic and not one that he was, in a sense, morally responsible for. "It was two years before I wasn't worried about kids looking at my disfigurement, and now I don't mind at all," said one islander who had sustained an eye injury that left his face disfigured and caused him to tear continuously.

It may be mentioned that acceptable individuals sometimes became faulty persons for a brief period of time. A temporary disorder in communication equipment would render a person unable, for a while, to participate as smoothly as usual during interplay. Laryngitis, extraction of teeth preparatory to obtaining false ones, intoxication, nasal disturbances causing one to wheeze, a stiff neck—all these were common reasons for temporarily transforming the individual into a faulty person.

In the community there were a few other commoners whose behavior caused them to be at fault in many of the interplays in which they participated. A few of the islanders seemed to have been demoralized, interactionally speaking, by their rise in social status, and could not help bragging continuously about their achievements and their contacts in the non-crofter world. These persons tended to be thought of as insensitive and inflexible in their demands, and wherever they appeared others present would have to make a slight effort to keep from making apparent to their fellow-sufferers that they

thought the braggart was behaving improperly. However slight these offenses, the patience of recipients was taxed whenever they were in the presence of these few braggarts.

Two other faulty persons among commoners might be mentioned. There was one boy of nineteen who was so sensitive about the moment-to-moment view that others took of him, and so cowed and desirous to please, that even in the circle of his own family he was self-conscious, conveying this undue preoccupation with self to all with whom he had contact.[2] And there was a man, Bill White, previously alluded to, who played communication tricks; he would joke and kid like other islanders, but he did this during serious occasions, and cut his jokes so fine, acting so well the part he was toying with, and carrying on the joke for so long, that persons came to distrust him.[3] With him, one never knew where one stood, for there was no easy way to discover whether he was at any given moment serious or not. He protected himself from being considered simply mendacious by maintaining a gleeful, aggressive air in his communication, ready when forced into a corner to admit that he had only been joking.

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In Dixon, when the gentry appeared in the presence of commoners, interactional tension occurred. This dysphoria tended to be minimal when the gentry acted in their traditional capacity, appearing on the stage during a community concert or in specially reserved seats; it tended to be quite acute when prolonged informal interplay was necessary between gentry and commoner. From the point of view of the interaction that commoners carried on, the gentry were all faulty persons. This fact seems significant enough in the life or the community and significant enough for an understanding of interaction there to warrant further elaboration and analysis. In attempting this analysis, it will be possible to extend a little the treatment in Chapter VII of sign situations.

In the sociological literature, it is assumed that a person who has roles or other attributes which qualify him for radically incompatible kinds of treatment causes sociological difficulties.[4] In many cases where an individual possesses attributes which qualify him for radically different treatments, primacy is accorded to one role in one situation and to another role in another situation.[5] Thus, for any given situation, there will always be a role defined as officially relevant and other roles defined as irrelevant. Action, then, need not break down for want of a pattern to follow.

In Dixon, there are some situations in which a genuine dilemma occurs as to which of two patterns of respect, a deferential one or an

[2] For a psychoanalytical view of this kind of conduct, see Paul Schilder, "The Social Neurosis," *Psychoanalytic Review*, XXV, 1–19.

[3] For example, during a violin performance at a house party, he would turn to his neighbor and pretend to be whispering to him in barely permissible subordinate interplay, all the while conveying by his manner that he was merely making fun of the social arrangement which allowed listeners to enter into such interplay. At a whist social he would seriously say to a fellow crofter, "You have to take an interest, you know," and later the crofter would learn that Bill had won the booby prize. Similarly, at a game of "500" among three guests in his home, he would say, with a barely perceptible twinkle, "I'll surely win the next 500," conveying almost an admission that his interest was insufficiently aroused to make this even a possibility. On another occasion, while talking to the newly arrived doctor and his wife, Bill said, "I'll be glad when these Bolsheviks are out and we get Britons back in power," knowing that everyone but the newly-arrived pair knew he was a local committee man for the Labour Party.

[4] A basic statement of this problem is given by E. C. Hughes, "Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status," *Amer. J. Sociol.*, L, 353–359. A clear example of the problem introduced by someone of indeterminate status is given by Doyle, *op. cit.*, in his discussion of the relationship established by whites to free Negroes. See especially chap. vii, "Etiquette and the Free Negro."

[5] See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, p. 302.

equalitarian one, the gentry are to be accorded by commoners. Explicit discussions occur among commoners as to whether or not it is proper and desirable to "sir" the laird or just to call him Mr. Alexander, and whether a special section of the seats at the annual concerts ought to be reserved for the gentry or whether they should be required like everyone else to take what is available at the time of their arrival. These discussions were heated and had to do with expressive acts which crofters ordinarily kept from consciousness, or at least kept silent about. Today no consensus exists in the community as to how these matters ought to be handled. Different commoners handle the question in different ways. But in many cases, the decision taken by a particular commoner is taken selfconsciously; he knows that other commoners act in other ways and that the whole matter is problematical. When more than one commoner is present at commoner-gentry interplay, then tension in this matter seems especially high, for each commoner tends to feel that the salutation and other gestures of respect he performs toward the gentry will be examined by the other commoners for signs of undue insolence or undue deference. The few crofters who still touch their caps to the laird feel particularly selfconscious in this context, finding themselves caught between what is for them "natural" respect and the implied claims of fellow-crofters that the laird is no longer to be treated as someone superior.

Another example may be cited. The retired doctor on the island—a person of the gentry class—has an adult son who has not succeeded in reconfirming the professional status of his father and grandfather and has taken to operating a small farm. There are a handful of commoners who accept this man as one of them, as he apparently wants to be accepted. They reciprocally first-name him and participate with him in informal convivial social occasions. For other commoners, however, he is neither fish nor fowl. They find it difficult to decide how to treat him, and when they do decide they cannot carry out the treatment in a spontaneous and unthinking way. He is for them a faulty person. Apparently he deeply feels the anomaly of his position. When in the presence of commoners, he feels constrained to talk and act more loudly than others, putting himself in what he apparently knows to be a foolish, unworthy position. Apparently he feels that the only way he can establish himself as an acceptable ordinary person is to show others, in a continuous and relentless way, that he thinks someone like himself is just as hopeless and impossible as (he feels) they think he is.

When there is a dilemma of status, embarrassment often results. However, it frequently seems that the dysphoria which occurs in these situations is not so much due to the fact that persons will decide in favor of one line of treatment or in favor of another, but that

thought and consideration has to be given to such matters. If a definition of the situation is not automatic and unthinking, then, from the point of view of interaction, it does not much matter how things come to be defined, for dysphoria is likely to arise no matter what line of treatment is finally fixed upon. This leads us to appreciate that dysphoric interaction can be caused by status difficulties much less blatant than the one that occurs during a genuine dilemma of status.

During interplay in Dixon, it is customary for certain social attributes of the participants to be declared officially irrelevant and for others to be defined as the ones which ought to determine treatment during the interaction. However there were always special circumstances which forced upon the attention of participants a role usually successfully suppressed. Thus, in a friendly interplay, the knowledge that two of the participants were married and had been for years was allowed to enter the interaction at appropriate times but could also be conveniently kept from consciousness at other times. However, when a young couple was about to get married, or had very recently been married, their new relationship was something that often could not be suppressed from attention by persons with whom they interacted. The new social fact tended to disrupt the usual inattention to such matters, causing the participants to become selfconsciously involved in the interplay. Frequently this tension seemed to be released by jokes and "kidding." Engaged persons or newly-married ones while in the presence of others frequently treated each other in a stiff and distant fashion, apparently in an attempt to counteract the effect they had upon the interaction. Thus, individuals in the process of undergoing a basic change in status tended to become, for a while, faulty persons, for their changing status could not be kept from mind in situations where it ought to have been irrelevant. The laird, who is in the process of selling his land and losing his traditional status, is partly for this reason a faulty person for the commoners.

It has been suggested that officially irrelevant roles may be handled in such a way as not to disturb the euphoria of interaction. For example, at meals in Dixon, everyone present (except infants) is given a helping of about the same size, and differences in age, sex, and kinship are momentarily set aside. However it is also expected that a participant's officially irrelevant attributes will qualify in a minor way the treatment accorded to him in his officially relevant capacities. Thus, among commoners at dinner, an adult guest of either sex will be served first, and girls and young women are expected to eat a little less than others present. Similarly, the clerks in the Dixon shops are expected to treat all customers equally; each customer has a right to be treated with a modicum of civility, to be given an equal share of rationed goods, and to be waited on in turn. Yet it is also

expected that there will be something in the tone of the treatment to distinguish islander from foreigner, crofter from gentry, kinfolk from someone unrelated. The point here is that in some situations no one seemed sure as to just how much qualification of this minor kind was to prevail and where in the interaction it was to be expressed. There would be no dilemma as to the rights and obligations to be officially acknowledged, yet there might be uncertainty over the covert recognitions to be given to the officially irrelevant statuses.

Furthermore, it seemed that when officially irrelevant statuses qualified a person for treatment that was radically different from the kind accorded him in his officially relevant role, difficulties arose. Spontaneous involvement in the interplay in terms of the officially relevant roles tended to become swamped by nervousness over potential responses that were officially irrelevant and which ought to have been suppressed. The fiction that the participant was just another participant became difficult to accept unthinkingly, even though lip-service could be paid to it without difficulty. For example, when the doctor's wife came to shop, she was treated in general like any other customer, but it was a little difficult and embarrassing to do so. On such occasions, the tendency of the person causing difficulty to "lean over backwards" to fit into officially defined patterns, or too much enter into the spirit of things, did not succeed in preventing dysphoria from occurring.

We have considered the fact that interaction between crofter and gentry on the island tended, wherever and whenever it occurred, to by dysphoric. Persons on one side did not quite know where they stood with persons on the other side, nor where they ought to stand. Every situation became a sign-situation, with persons on either side anxiously examining every event, feeling that a judgment of their officially irrelevant attributes was being conveyed, or that others might jump to the conclusion that such a valuation was being conveyed. An unthinking involvement in the actual events at hand was difficult to maintain.

It may be added that two general strategies seemed to be practiced as a means of avoiding dysphoric interaction. First, there was avoidance. Members of the gentry attempted, for example, to send the maid to do their shopping or to telephone their orders for delivery. They also attempted to attend as few community socials as possible. Secondly, joking relationships were maintained, allowing participants to take an unserious view of the confusion and dysphoria resulting from interaction between persons who could not be at ease with each other.

# *Chapter XXI: Involvement Poise*

doi

During interplay in Dixon, participants tended to set aside such of their attributes and qualifications as were considered irrelevant and to interact chiefly on the basis of rights and obligations felt to be relevant. Persons expressed in this way that they were not so bound and tied by their social roles that they could not set some of them aside for a time and act in terms of others. A neighbor or relation who came to help with the harvest would expect to be accorded a few ceremonial gestures at the beginning and end of the day's efforts, but during the work he would take his place alongside members of the immediate family and any paid help, and tactfully restrict himself to the role of a worker. At a community social, the oldest and youngest persons present might dance together, a woman seventy and a boy of ten, and while they and the others would joke a little about this, during most of the dance the couple would simply in the capacity of dancers.

We have considered the fact that during euphoric interplay participants express immediate involvement—and immersion, as it were—in the proceedings of the interplay. It must be carefully stated, however, that while participants regularly expressed unthinking involvement in the proceedings, it was felt that there ought to be a definite limit to this involvement, and participants made quite sure to express or feign that this limit existed.[1]

Whatever the occasion, it seemed that the individual felt strongly obliged to show that he was not fully constrained by the events at hand; that he had a self available for interaction that could not be overwhelmed, a self that was not bound by any uncontrollable impulse to act, a self that was free to answer to the interaction not merely for the moment but wherever it might lead. Instead of conveying merely an involvement in the proceedings, the participant conveyed a delicate balance between involvement and self-control. He expressed the fact that regardless of what happened during the interplay, or what commitments he had outside the interplay, he could exercise self-control.

[1] An historical treatment of changes in the etiquette of self-control is given in Norbert Elias, *Uber den Prozess der Zivilisation* (Basel: Haus zum Falken, 1939), especially Vol. I, chap. ii, "Uber die 'Zivilisation' als eine spezifische Veränderung des menschlichen Verhaltens."

Participants, then, expressed the fact that they could temporarily dissociate themselves from those of their statuses which were defined as irrelevant for the interplay. They also, as suggested, expressed the fact that they were not completely constrained by the events at hand which occurred in the interplay although they were to a degree spontaneously involved in the interplay. Participants gave the appearance that they had mobilized their selves for the interaction at hand, rigidly bound by only one obligation—the obligation to sustain continued communication with the others present. Failure to exercise this control and this readiness for interaction meant that the participant could not be trusted to act so as not to disrupt the involvement of others in the interplay; the appearance of someone acting with insufficient self-control itself caused others to become ill at ease.

In this chapter, some of the factors involved in poise—the handling of oneself during interplay—will be considered. While poise is a tenuous thing to study objectively, and a difficult thing to report upon, it is a factor that can hardly be avoided in a general study of interplay.[2]

## Ego Control

Co-participants during interplay are in a vulnerable position with respect to one another. They are obliged to make themselves accessible to one another and to treat each other with forbearance. They must therefore run the risk that one among them may take unfair advantage of the communication opportunities that have been entrusted to him. Linguistically or expressively, he may abuse his position by conveying a message that accords an improper valuation to himself or to others present.

1. One of the most explicitly recognized roles of interplay on the island is that each participant control and restrain his own demands for approval and esteem.[3] At the linguistic level, it was felt that persons ought not to "blow their own horn, " to brag, or in general to convey a message whose purport redounded in their favor. At the expressive level, it was felt that persons should not attempt to become the center of attention too frequently or hold this position too long once it was obtained, or in general attempt to manipulate the physical situation in order that it might express something favorable about them.

In general, when persons were involved in conversation, they made an effort to keep the topic of conversation away from anything having to do with their own praiseworthy accomplishments. If this topic could not be avoided, then there was a tendency for the indi-

[2] It would seem that the only sizable literature on poise is to be found in books on etiquette and manners. On the whole, this material has been scorned by social scientists, presumably because the significant observations on the moral norms of interplay contained therein are indiscriminately mixed both with personal exhortations as to how individuals ought to behave and with optimistic claims as to how leaders of circles now extinct (or becoming so) actually conduct themselves. In scorning these works we have also, of course, scorned to study many fundamental aspects of social interaction. Unfortunately, some students have similarly by-passed Simmel's treatment of "sociability" because of the courtly bias in some of the standards he describes.

[3] Societies of course differ in rules regarding modesty, but certainly modesty during communication is stressed in many non-Western cultures. For example, see Hsien Chin Hu, "The Chinese Concept of Face," *American Anthropologist*, n.s. XLVI (45–64), 49. "The over-estimation of one's ability, the exaggeration of one's capacity, designed to elevate one above one's fellows is frowned upon by society. A person given to boasting will not have the sympathy of his group when he fails; rather will he incur ridicule. A person with such poor judgment of his powers is termed 'light and floating' (*chi'ing-fou*) in character; a person serious in his

vidual to minimize and detract from his accomplishment, or to treat it in a joking manner as a means of signifying that it was not bo be associated with the self involved in participation. The more recent and the more praiseworthy the accomplishment, the more the individual seemed to feel obliged to show that he had not taken it too "seriously."

Perhaps the clearest evidence of crofter circumspection in self-references is to be found in their use of the term "I." If a sentence could be phrased in such a way as to omit the term, it was omitted. For example, in giving advice, an islander did not say, "I think you can do it this way," or "This is the way I do it," but rather, "Some folk do it this way," or "Let's try it this way," or "Maybe it'll work this way." Strangers from off the island who unselfconsciously followed the habit of beginning many statements with the phrase "I think that . . . ," or "I feel that . . . ," or "In my opinion . . . ," were felt to be improperly concerned with self and caused the islanders some tension during interaction.

It is helpful to look at this general rule of restraint in terms of some of the offenses that are committed against it. There were a few persons in the community, drawn from among those who'd had much contact with the outside world and were rising in class status, who seemed to have become demoralized in regard to ego discipline.[4] These faulty persons would employ strategies that were transparent to others in order to bolster the valuation they felt others were making of them. They would tall stories that presumed to be of interest in their own right but which in fact merely provided the speaker with an opportunity of telling of events which redounded in some way in his favor, or they would introduce a topic of conversation that would inevitably lead another participant to mention matters in which they had excelled. Or they would loudly claim complete incapacity for the act they were about to perform, pretending to establish a definition of self that would not be embarrassed by the failure that was about to follow, and then perform the act successfully. Or they would ask the opinion of someone present on such matters as the weight of one of their new lambs or the condition of their Italian rye grass, leaving this person questioned with no way out but that of a compliment. Or they would make the kind of flat denial of personal qualifications which forced others into denial of the denial, i.e. they would "fish" for compliments. Or they would make light of their accomplishments in an insufficiently convincing fashion. And they would attempt to monopolize the conversation. These persons had a reputation throughout the island for this kind of behavior and they were felt to be burdensome in conversation. Up to the age of about thirty they were explicitly criticized, albeit in a joking way, for being braggarts.

endeavors but careful in reckoning his abilities and circumspect in his dealings with others is called 'sinking and steady' (*ch'en-chuo*) or reliably heavy (*wen-chug*). The former type of personality cannot be trusted, but latter is a good citizen and a trustworthy friend. Now is not easy to gauge one's capacity exactly at every point nor is it possible to foresee the outcome of every venture, so it is wise to underestimate one's value. In this way one will always have the satisfaction of hearing.one's friends deny this inferiority. . . A person 'without self-training' is one who shows no consideration for others or is given to boasting."

[4] See the discussion of faulty persons in chapter xx.

2. In Dixon, those of the fully adult generation who had not had more than average contact with the outside world showed strict circumspection in dealing with their selves. It was felt that during interplay each participant ought to be able to hold at a distance his involvement in an event that had occurred previous to the interplay or was scheduled to occur immediately after the interplay. It was felt that while he was a participant these extraneous matters, however crucial for him, were to be left unmentioned or referred to lightly. Thus, while islanders seemed to have a deep, genuine concern for the welfare of their children, a parent whose two children had the flu would contain his anxiety and suggest to those with whom he happened to be conversing that it was true the situation was a little awkward. Persons returning from the very real hazards of a day's fishing in a bad sea, or from the hardships of a day in the peat banks, tended to underplay in a marked way the dangers, the hardships, and the rewards and losses of their activity. In making self-references in the presence of non-islanders, it was common for an islander to belittle himself, modestly referring to himself as merely a crofter.

3. During interplay, an islander was expected to dissociate himself modestly from any event which occurred during the interplay that gave evidence to others of his desirable qualities. Thus, at socials, persons winning a prize would laughingly discount their deed by such a phrase as, "The de'il's kind to his een." In making a good shot at billiards, it was required that the player give a convincing expressive demonstration that he did not take his luck or skill too seriously. The youngest players, especially when first learning, often did not have themselves in control in this way, and would convey an expression of pure pride at making a good shot. This was thought to show weakness of character, and caused some embarrassment. Players of the middle age group—twenty to thirty—were aware that they ought not to take too much open pleasure in their good shots and would only allow their true improper feelings to escape for a moment before casting off the flow of improper signs with a sarcastic remark, an openly posed sneer, or a boisterous challenge to the next player. The older players, whether beginners or experts, in the main had themselves beautifully under control, and could make a good shot, express delight in the accomplishment, laugh heartily and aggressively in reference to the effect of this shot on the opposing team, and never give the impression that they are judging themselves by the shot. After such a shot they could say, "Class will tell, don't you know," and perfectly convince everyone present that they were not taking their excellence seriously. During the athletic contests held at the annual gala day, the same kind of self-control was to be found. Only in the case of two competitors, who seemed to have seen them-

selves as athletes, did a too-earnest attitude appear and a too-serious enjoyment of winning.

4. Participants tended also to try to dissociate themselves from any role of special honor they may have been accorded in the interplay or social occasion. At the concerts, performers would take their places in the audience like anyone else, even paying the entrance price. At the turn before their own, they would unobtrusively leave their seats and make their way backstage via the kitchen. After giving their performance they would retire to their seats in the audience by the same unobtrusive route. And usually they would not come back to their seats with special expressions of elation but would give the impression of being in the same quiet mood as the audience. Those organizing or M.C.'ing socials or concerts also tended to handle their special role in a way implying that they took no personal credit for it. Those without too much experience would often attempt too strongly to apologize for their special status, on the ground that they were unworthy vessels, and cause some embarrassment and dysphoria by little speeches of self-depreciation. But in the main those who led the socials were able to talk to the audience and move though the hall bent on organization tasks without giving the feeling that they had taken their honor too seriously, or had become distracted and confused because of it, or were trying to put too much of themselves into it.

It seemed in Dixon that actors who possessed attributes which others were required to suppress from consciousness during interplay were often more alive to the disturbing effect of their peculiarities than were the other persons who had to contend with them. Persons were always mentioning their shortcomings and attempting to dissociate themselves from these attributes so that in some magical way the person present to the others would not be the disturbing one. If a commoner found that he had to chair a political meeting because a minister or a member the gentry could not be found to do it, he would introduce his introduction with an apology, attempting to convince the audience that he, at least, was not taking his honorific role seriously and that the person before them actually was not the kind to presume to such a station. A man who felt that others felt he was henpecked would jokingly admit that his wife made all the decisions. A thirty-five year old woman, somewhat ugly and with little chance of getting a husband, would joke at her younger sister's wedding saying that if she knew there were going to be all those presents she would get married herself. In guessing the weight of a parcel of groceries or the number of beans in a jar—typical competitions for raising money at socials—almost everyone making an effort would loudly and forcibly claim that they were no good at such things and

were bound to be way off. The same remonstrance occurred when someone took a billiard shot for the first time. And very frequently when conversation sprang up between adults and an old person, the old person would hastily make a depreciating remark about himself, saying "Wasn't that pretty good for an old man," or "That's as good as an old man can do." In all of these instances, the apologetic actor apparently felt that those present would be spared the effort of making forbearance allowances for him if they could be shown that he himself did not judge himself by the standards by which he was inadequate, or that he did not take himself seriously.

Sometimes this kind of interactional footwork succeeded and euphoria was maintained and even strengthened. Usually, however, the person apologizing for himself would sound insincere or too apologetic; in any case, the ruse often failed and increased the discomfort of others present.

5. The sense in which individuals were required to hold themselves off from any overinvolvement and to hold themselves ready for interaction is illustrated by events which are a matter of life and death.

At times when life is threatened, it becomes extremely difficult for persons to maintain themselves poised for interaction; they often forget themselves as communicators and become solely concerned with survival.[5] Behavior under these circumstances—whether the person in danger forgets himself or does not—becomes, apparently, a memorable thing, and accounts of behavior under stress are often repeated. Thus, through two world wars the island's men had been recruited as seamen and many of them experienced sinkings. Tales are told of the composure that some seamen showed under these threats, behaving as participants in interaction and not merely as men with their own lives to save, and also tales of persons who completely forgot themselves. During the last war, the island was strafed a little, and tales are still told of how persons reacted.

> A woman in her thirties who had worked for a time as a clerk in one of the Dixon shops said: "Well, we heard this shooting so we all went to climb into the shelter. Old Jimmy Scott [the then manager the shop] was behind me and got excited and said, 'Haste du lass,' and gave me a push. I fell on my hands and knees and tore them and laughed. I don't think I ever laughed louder." (The teller went on to suggest that it was not so much that Jimmy lost social control of himself but that he attempted a ludicrously thin veil of concern for others.)

> During the research Dr. Wren, in testing out his new sailboat with two commoners, a youth of fifteen and a young man of twenty-six, capsized in a rough wind. All three managed to survive although only the doctor could swim. Apparently for a moment it was each man for himself until each had managed to straddle the upturned hull. For the

[5] A clear example of this is found in so-called "gallows humor." In situations of extreme deprivation, it is thought praiseworthy to joke about the situation and demonstrate that one still has a self free for the interaction. See the article on this subject by A. J. Obrdlik, *Amer. J. Sociol.*, XLVII, 715–716.

youngest survivor the image of the three of them forgetting each other was memorable, and he repeated the tale many times as a subject for humor.

6. There were times when a particular task required momentary placing of one's body in a position where the give and take of communication could not be easily maintained. At such times persons either tended to avoid entering into interaction or attempted to initiate interplay and by jokes and comments show that the self that could not properly participate was not their real self but one so unrelated to them that light jokes could be made about it. Thus, in carrying a sheep from one enclosure to another, or in lifting a hundredweight sack of feed from the pier dolly to a truck, or in straining a crowbar to free a piece of rock in the quarry, men would often seek out the eyes of others and initiate a momentary smile or openly feigned gesture of strain. Instances such as the one mentioned below were common:

A crew of men are unloading the steamboat on a Friday night. A wall of crates gets built up and a young member of the crew finds himself leaning up against them to hold them up. The special hook used to grasp the boxes cannot be found, so the crane cannot relieve the man of his burden. In order to keep the crates from falling he must use all of his body and not turn or twist an inch. The rest of the crew burst out laughing at the sight of someone completely constrained in this way. He blushes and laughs.

## Emotional Control

During interplay in Dixon, individuals tended to hold themselves back from becoming completely involved in and committed to any particular response they were making to the situation. This restraint characterized both linguistic and expressive communications. The mere appearance of anyone unreservedly throwing himself into an activity or linguistic message tended of itself to make those who witnessed it ill at ease. (Only children were permitted the luxury of complete expression.) It was also felt that such behavior made unfair claims on all the participants, for if a working acceptance was to be maintained after someone had indulged himself in a free response of this kind, then the line established by the uninhibited response would have to be followed by the other participants. They would have to do all the accommodating, for in fully committing himself the offender ceases to be able to apply tact and make allowances for events which might yet occur. Visitors to the island frequently caused tension in this way, for example, by too heartily enjoying a dance at the social, or by running to get somewhere, or by becoming so

involved in a political discussion as to fall into using profanities in the presence of women.

1. When engaged in a task in the presence of others, islanders tended to inhibit any angry "takes" to unexpected task frustrations. A crofter, finding one of his lambs tipped over in a wet ditch and weakened by a night of cold, would just shake his head. A person on a picnic accidentally breaking the glass around the cork in a thermos bottle would not swear. Very irksome lengthy tasks would be undertaken, such as taking out a few leaky planks from the side of a rowboat and replacing them with sound ones, or fitting a cabinet into a kitchen, and no outburst would ever occur. When a machine in the woolen mill broke down, it was only the manager, a non-islander, who would go into a tantrum.

In the presence of task frustrations, islanders commonly attempt to define the situation as one that ought to be approached quietly and slowly. In acting in this stoical way, they leave themselves free to continue with social interaction, safe from any impulsive entanglement that would force them to withdraw from interplay.

2. A special case of overcommitment is found in what are sometimes called emotional outbursts. It was understood that persons have a breaking point beyond which they lose control of themselves and become totally involved in an affective response to the situation. Fits of anger or laughter, crying spells, and temper tantrums are cases in point. In many such cases, the individual's action would become all "take" and no reply, and the take would be such that frequently all that others could do was allow the offender to become the center of attention or studiously avoid looking at him. Participants tended to feel that they had on their hands an object of attention but not a full-fledged fellow-participant. Whether the offender had given himself up to laughter, tears, or rage, he was felt to have put himself in a position where it was impossible for him to respond to the ongoing events in the interplay. In Dixon these kinds of outbursts were expected of children more than of adults, and adults who were faulty in this regard tended to be not merely persons who lost control of themselves in these ways but persons for whom special handling was required because it was thought they might be capable of this kind of behavior.

As previously suggested, islanders tended to suppress signs of strong emotions at such times as arrivals and departures. An illustration is given below:

> A well-liked young islander, John Neil, is leaving the island for a prolonged voyage as a ship's engineer. On the eve of his departure he spends his time, as he ordinarily would have, playing billiards at the hall. During the game no allusion is made to his approaching depar-

> ture, and it is not thought peculiar that he should spend his last night at home in in this way. As the time for the play to end approaches, William Crosely [*sic*], in his fifties, a natural leader in the community and a warm friend of John's, makes ready to leave.
> Croseley: "Well, lads, it's time I was off. Good night, John."
> John, who apparently fails to get the slight glint of humoring Croseley's voice, says in feigned light disapproval: "Are you no going to say cheerio, Will; I won't be back for eight months."
> Croseley, smiling broadly as a sign that he has caught John out and has gotten a rise out of him: "So you won't." Croseley crosses over and shakes hands with John, lightly wishes him good luck, and leaves. When the game finally breaks up everyone says good-bye to John, no one bothering to shake hands. Throughout no emotion has been shown.
> Eight months later John returns. He has been to Singapore. After coming to Capital City he gets a free ride to Dixon on one of the local fishing boats which had been in to Capital City for repairs. A few clusters of persons await his arrival. In one cluster is his betrothed and her girl friend, in another a few of his male friends. As the boat comes alongside most of the persons on the pier wave a little to John. As the boat is made fast he steps off, nods to his betrothed, shakes hands with his close boy friends, and immediately launches into a discussion of the repairs that have been made on the local boat and how its engine is standing up. A few persons come up and shake his hand but each time there is no insistence that John make more than one or two statements on the subject of himself or his voyage. He is allowed to fall back immediately into the discussion that is being maintained concerning the local boat.

During crises such as deaths, crying, too, is suppressed, although sometimes not altogether successfully. For example, Alice Simon, twenty-four, admits that she cried at the four deaths that have occurred in her immediate family, although these are the only occasions when she admits to having lost control in this way. Interestingly enough, during romantic movies shown in the darkened community hall, many women feel it all right to weep. Presumably at these times there is no interaction that can be embarrassed by their actions.

Protective strategies are often employed to save participants from the embarrassment caused by a display of uncontrollable emotion. In Dixon, when persons had become emotionally involved in the proceedings of an interplay to the degree where they felt they were no longer in control of the situation, and where it was not feasible for them to withdraw in an orderly manner from the interaction to protect themselves and it, they tended to cast their eyes downward and turn their faces away. In this way an attempt could be made with the voice to suggest that everything was in control and that the current message was being responded to, while in fact expression in the eyes and face suggested that the individual was still bound in

response to the earlier disturbing message. Of course, other persons in the interplay often assisted the individual in the exercise of his barely permissible act of concealment by tactfully not directing questions to him until they felt his voice could handle it without showing emotion.

## On Control of Taking

In Dixon one of the most dramatic and consistent ways in which persons were required to show that they were in control of themselves was in the acceptance of indulgences. When one person accepted anything that was gratifying while in the presence of others, and especially when the means of indulgence could be considered limited in the sense that others present might be correspondingly deprived, then a preliminary refusal of the indulgence or a request that it be lessened was almost always given the participants in the interplay. On the rare occasions when this preliminary refusal was not forthcoming, or when it was too obviously in contradiction with the expressive behavior of the individual, or when acceptance and eagerness were not made a joke of, then dysphoria followed.

Interplay during meals was perhaps the time when self-control regarding desires was most consistently expressed. When being served food, the recipient conveyed the fact that the serving was ample by the use of such stock phrases as, "That's any amount." Whens second helping was offered, as it invariably was, the recipient would either refuse and wait for at least a second round of requests, or positively refuse, or qualify an acceptance by very standard phrases such as "just a peerie corn, please," or first ask if all present had had enough. On many occasions the hostess, after a meal, would ask if anyone wanted any biscuits with their tea, obtain a "no" from everyone, then bring biscuits out, which were then eaten by everyone. At tea-time during socials, when persons went around the ball with wide trays of biscuits, buns, and sandwiches, it was felt proper to refill one's plate as frequently as desired but was felt improper to have more than three pieces of food an one's plate at a time or eagerly to seek service before the person with the tray had come within a few feet of one. It should be added that it was necessary to do more than merely follow the verbal forms of preliminary refusal; if a discrepancy was obvious between the linguistic component of the trial refusal and the eater's expressive behavior, then he was felt to be in some way a faulty participant.

> Mealtime in the hotel kitchen. Mr. Tate feels he has gotten more than his share of apple tart and more than he desires. He says to the hotel

> maid, "Here, Alice, take some." He cuts off a third of his tart, preparatory to passing it. Alice remonstrates, "No, maybe Jean [the other maid] wants some." In saying this, however, her eyes are fixed on the tart and her tone is abstracted and unconvincing. Jean refuses any more tart, and everyone at table feels a little embarrassed at the sight of uninhibited desire.

Similarly, when a person was chosen as next in turn to play billiards, and was aware he had a right to his turn by the system of rotation, he would almost always offer a mild disclaimer.

In general, the please or request intonation which preceded any verbal request seemed to serve not merely the purpose of conveying the fact that the other was not being ordered or presumed upon, but also that the person making the request was not completely bound by the indulgence he was requesting.

During many economic transactions on the island, an effort was made to demonstrate that an affection for money, though understood to be strong, was not overwhelming. In the hotel, the maids would share their tips with the kitchen staff and would do this with a gesture indicating that a tip we not something to conceal from other workers out of greed. So, too, the managers of the hotel always seemed to find it a little difficult to take payment from the hotel guests; of their own accord they would reduce to an even sum the bills of younger guests and would not charge for extra meals that guests were sometimes forced to take because of a delay in transportation service. Similarly, when someone not a neighbor, or friend, or relative was hired for a day's work, there would be no bickering over payment, and the hirer would always try to add something extra to the payment. Again, when islanders sold dairy products to outsiders, or took in their laundry, a round sum was usually charged for the service, the server tending to make some voluntary sacrifices (whenever necessary) in order to do so. So, too, the bus driver would go a little out of his way for a passenger and feel that it was, in a sense, beneath him to charge for the small extra cost of this service to him. And when islanders came down to the pier to buy fish from the two local boats, the skippers would feel awkward about having to fix a price and would set some low round figure. So, too, when one crofter gave another a haircut (there are no barbers on the island and the islanders scrupulously adhere to the maritime tradition of neat haircuts), the temporary barber might accept a package of cigarettes but no money. And, similarly, if someone obliged a neighbor and slaughtered a sheep (technically illegal), the actor would be given a meal, or a package of cigarettes, or a drink, not money.

Control was also exerted in accepting small ceremonial indulgences from others. When a bag of sweets would be offered, only one

piece would be taken at a time, and never more than three or four pieces altogether. At parties and weddings, when the host would take his bottle and shot glass and go from one guest to another giving each a drink, the men would drink the whole shot glass the first round but on successive rounds later in the evening only a part of the glass would be drunk.

It should also be added that Dixonites made an effort, in undertaking any pleasurable activity, to show that they were not too eager to do so. Thus, persons would usually come slowly to the table for a meal. When seated to play "500" or another game, they would not rush into the game with passion but allow a few minutes for general talk as a kind of warm-up. If a man came too early for billiards, or attempted to hasten the beginning of a game, he was lightly chided for being over-concerned. In drinking any alcoholic beverage, men invariably preceded each gulp with a slight pause during which the drinkers would look each other in the eye and say "cheers;" to take a drink without this ceremonial recognition of the others present would express, among other things, overeagerness to drink. A man approaching a girl at a community dance in quest of a dance would tend either to walk slowly or to run with openly feigned eagerness.

## On Control of Keeping

Those who possessed supplies of indulgences tended to show (and exert) control over selfish enjoyment of them.

When neighbors dropped in during the day or evening, as often occurred, the offer of a cup of tea was the minimum required gesture of friendliness. No household crisis could excuse the hosts from this offering. Failure to make the offer wouldn't only be considered a discourtesy but would also show that the household was itself operating under too much economic constraint. Similarly, few meals are prepared but that extra fish or potatoes are included, so that second helpings can be pressed on each participant and so that no one will have to decide whether or not to take the last piece. (A woman who counts the potatoes she boils for dinner, allowing a fixed and limited number each participant, is considered mean and is gossiped about.) If a container of bought food, such as beets, pilchards, or corned beef, were wholly consumed, then the hostess would almost always offer to open another. Interestingly enough, when men are alone together on a job of work, lambing or casting peats, for example, one among them will take on the role of housewife for the duration of a meal and will make sure that extra cups of tea are pressed on everyone. One or two men will have thought to bring milk for the tea and as a matter of course will pass it around to everyone.

As in the rest of Britain, biscuits and candies—which islanders of all ages loved dearly—were strictly rationed. Each person thus had a supply of indulgences to do with as he pleased; he could consume them himself, or give them to others as expressions of friendship and respect, or use them as a means of ingratiation. Rarely is an adult seen openly consuming self-purchased sweets but that the consumer offers the perceiver a share. Persons who wanted to consume sweets or cigarettes in the presence of many persons, e.g., at an auction, frequently employed the strategy of limiting the offer to those closest, as a kind of adaptive compromise. And while islanders would furtively pop a candy into their mouths when they felt they would be unobserved, it seemed that most islanders used the greater part of their sweet ration for ceremonial purposes, as a means of communicating involvement in others and control over private passions. So, too, in the fields around the community hall during a social, men cache bottles of liquor which they are forbidden by law and custom from bringing into the hall, and throughout the night each owner of a bottle brings knots of men out with him to have a drink. In a place where liquor is costly, difficult to obtain, and dearly loved, the passing around of one's bottle is not only a way of conferring high esteem upon the recipient but is also a genuine act of self-control, showing a manly capacity to hold off one's thirst and recognize the social amenities. Cigarettes, which are extremely costly on the island,[6] are similarly used as part of the island's sign equipment—part of its ceremonial language. At parties, the host will pass around a box-full. A dinner guest will show his respect for his hosts by elaborately offering cigarettes to everyone present at the end of the meal. On the most routine work occasions, a person taking out a cigarette will make at least a gesture of offering one to his nearest fellow-worker. And each time this ceremonial language was used, the speaker indicated to those around him, partly by the patterned equanimity with which the offer was made, that his poise could not be threatened by the passage of a valuable from himself to another.

[6] At over fifty cents a package, annual expenditure by some crofters on cigarettes is greater than the annual rent they pay for their cottage and land.

In the last two sections it was suggested that persons exercise self-control in accepting things from others and that persons exercise self-control in the attachment which they express to things they already have. It is apparent that if each person in a two-person interplay is to demonstrate both of these kinds of self-control, and if neither participant is to sacrifice or fail to obtain what he dearly desires and feels properly his due, then a kind of tacit cooperation will be required between the participants. Each will have to act in such a way as to make it possible for the other to show generosity without losing too much by it.

For example, when a person pays a visit to a friend, it is expected that he will volunteer to leave before he really wants to and before he thinks his hosts really want him to leave. It is expected that his hosts will remonstrate and coax him to stay.[7] When a person sells something small to a friend, it is expected that the seller will place a lower price on the article than the buyer is willing to countenance, and that the buyer will place a higher price than the seller thinks is fair. There regularly follows a process of reverse bargaining, with the parties reaching about the same selling point as they would have under normal bargaining procedures. Both individuals show that they have not been petty and yet lose little by showing it. When one commoner hires another by the day for his special skill as painter, m.son, or cabinet maker, then after lunch—which the guest-worker eats with the family he is working for—the worker makes the first move to get back to work, and the host makes a counteractive move to prolong the mealtime conversation with a second or third cup of tea. Some additional everyday illustrations may be given:

Three men are helping William Croseley dig his garden. Lunch time approaches.
Croseley: "Well, that should do it for now, let 's get some lunch." (He puts aside his spade and starts wiping his rubber boots on the grass.)
The workers continue for a moment longer, showing no haste to finish.
Croseley: "Come on now." The workers put aside their spades and start wiping their feet on the grass.
Croseley: "Surely that will be enough. (He has waited to say this for a moment, but not long enough for the men to have cleaned their boots.)
The workers keep wiping their feet for a few moments after they feel they have them clean enough.
(Everyone feels that everyone else has behaved properly; no dysphoria is felt.)

There are four men in the billiard room and all are engaged in playing a game. One of the men is Andy Dawson, the caretaker of the hall, who, properly speaking, ought to be taking care of the room, not playing in it. Ted Allen, a steady player, comes in.
Dawson: "Here, you go ahead, I've played enough." (Makes gestures of quitting.)
Allen: "No, no, finish the game, Andy."
Dawson: "Here, boy."
Allen takes up the cue.

A young man is taking his guest home on a wet night by motorcycle. It is agreed that the guest will walk from the turn of the road, a mile away from the host's house and half a mile away from the guest's house.
Guest, a couple of hundred yards from the turn in the road: "This will do nicely. You go on home now."
Host: "Don't be daft, boy, it's terrible wet." He drives on until the bend is reached.

[7] The social mechanism whereby both parties to an exchange feign willingness to accept deprivation seems to be quite generally found in societies. See, for example, Raymond Firth, *We, The Tikopia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1936), in describing courtesy patterns, p. 310: "Night comes on. The man, out of politeness, 'to make his face-good,' makes a show of going, but is pressed to stay and sleep with the family. He does so."

Guest: "Let me down, boy."
Host: "I'll just make the turn up here a bit." He drives on for another quarter mile before dropping his guest.

It has been suggested that when two persons compete over some matter each may "lean over backwards" in an effort to show that he is not overly involved in the issue. In the case of indulgences, information as to which of the two is the less involved in the indulgence can be reserved for transmission in the second round of offers and refusals, the first round being devoted to showing that neither person is too much concerned with the indulgence. The difficulty in this "after you, Alphonse" interchange is that participants sometimes are unsure as to how many circuits of offer and denial must be made before valid information about the other is forthcoming. Each participant comes to feel that he ought to take into account the fact that the other is merely being polite and so waits for an extra round of offers or denials. There is a degradation of the meaning of refusals or offers, and the communication circuit ceases to be useful for the passage of information. To use a term from communication engineering, a kind of "hunting" occurs. Thus, when one woman on the island wanted to find out if a guest really did want some more food, she found it expedient to break into the circle of offers and denials, repeated offers and repeated refusals, by grabbing the guest, changing the mood of the interchange, looking deep into his eyes and saying in a serious tone, "You're not just being polite, are you?"

# *Chapter XXII: On Projected Selves*

doi

Throughout this study it has been suggested that when islanders participate together in an interplay, countless events become available for aptly expressing the attitudes of the participants, especially the attitudes they have towards themselves and towards fellow-participants. With every word and gesture, a participant can convey his conception of himself and his conception of the others present, and every one of his words and gestures may be taken by others as an expression of these conceptions. The individual may, of course, attempt to conceal this expression or actually may not (even unconsciously) make use of opportunities for it, but in any case the others will assume that his behavior expresses his valuation of himself and them. It will therefore be advisable for the individual to take account of the possible interpretations that might be placed upon his behavior, regardless of which, if any, interpretation he thinks is correct.

When persons come together for purposes of interplay, each brings expectations as to the rights and obligations he will enjoy, and, by implication, a conception of himself which he expects the interplay will sustain. He also brings a familiarity with the treatment that ought to be accorded certain categories of persons and sufficient familiarity with symbols of status to hurriedly place those he meets into such social categories. And if the participants happen to know, or know of, one another, then, as Bales suggests, each participant may become, for the others, someone whose "... past actions and identity are remembered, including what he 'has done' prior to his entrance into the group and what he 'is' outside the present in-group, and are attributed to him in the present as a part of his total significance."[1] In other words, each participant brings to the interplay a preliminary state of social information.

[1] Robert F. Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis*, p. 71.

At the moment of coming together, each participant—by his initial conduct and appearance—is felt by others to "project" a self into the situation. Given the state of social information and given the availability of countless events for conveying expression, it seems

inevitable that even inaction on the part of an individual will be taken by others as a positive t on his part to say something. The participant may be non-committal and indefinite; he may be passive, and he may act unwittingly. None the less, others will feel that he has projected into the situation an assumption as to how he ought to be treated and hence, by implication, a conception of himself. If this project did not occur—if this initial social identification did not take place—then the participants could not begin to act in an orderly way to one another. As Simmel suggests, "The first condition of having to deal with somebody at all is to know with *whom* one has to deal."[2]

[2] Simmel, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

In the ordinary course of events, it would seem that the selves projected into an interplay provide a significant part of the initial definition of the situation, for it is by these selves that each participant knows what to expect from others and what is expected from him. These projected selves provide the guide lines for action, determining important aspects of the working acceptance that is sooner or later achieved. Each person's projected self gives the other something to go by. Whether participants accept the projected self of another, or whether they tactfully attempt to bring it into line with their conception of him, they are likely to use it as a starting point and as a basis of orientation in their treatment of him. If the interaction is not to be dysphoric, then, apparently, the self that an individual presents to or projects into the situation must be sufficiently familiar and acceptable to the others not to disturb their unthinking involvement in the interplay.

The selves that are initially projected into the situation, and the expectations associated with them, become, then, a basic premise of what is to follow in the interplay. The activity that does follow is, in a sense, merely an elaboration and controlled modification of the initially accepted status quo. It would seem, then, that interplay is an inherently conservative thing, and that all participants have a vested interest in maintaining the validity of the initial understanding, for if communications are intimately based upon an initial definition of the situation, then any contradiction of this definition is likely to leave the participants up in the air, lodged in roles and in conversation no longer supported by a definition of the situation. If the interplay is not to be brought to a confused and embarrassed halt, then the guiding assumptions provided by the initially projected selves must not be fundamentally altered or discredited, regardless of how the participants actually feel about the assumptions they have temporarily accepted. If the minute social system formed by persons during interplay is to be maintained, the definition of the situation must not be destroyed.

The presence of potential disruptions to the working acceptance, and the constant necessity of avoiding or side-stepping these difficulties, or, if they occur, of correcting or compensating for them, seem to be crucial conditions under which participants must operate. (While it is true that in many interplays a particular participant will formally or informally take on the responsibility of seeing that peace and order are maintained, still it can be said that all the others present are sworn in as deputies.) These crucial conditions seem to provide a very useful perspective from which to classify and analyze interplay behavior, leading us to bring together into one type, behaviors which bear the same relation to the contingencies of maintaining a given definition of the situation. While a treatment of interplay behavior based an this point of reference is implicit in some of the previous parts of this study, an explicit effort along these lines will be made in this chapter.

## Serious Disruptions

It was suggested that when an individual enters interplay he does so in a particular capacity; whether he is aware of it or not, others feel he has presented himself in a certain guise or light, making certain demands, willing to satisfy certain others, and in general anticipating that a valuation of a given kind will be placed upon him.

Events may occur during an interplay which provide information about a particular participant that is patently incompatible with the information that has been accepted or assumed concerning him. A self he has openly accepted (before himself and others) as having, he proves not to have; his projected self is discredited. And since his initially projected self served to guide the interplay—and was meant to go on doing so—the interplay itself becomes disordered. Two types of discreditings resulting in dysphoria will be considered: "gaffes" and "pretensions."

1. A gaffe may be defined as any event which precipitously and involuntarily discredits a projected self that has been acceptably integrated into a definition of the situation. A gaffe may be produced by the very participant whose projected self the gaffe embarrasses, or by another participant, or by an agency other than the participants.

In Dixon, anxiety over the possibility of committing a gaffe in interplay is often present. People in Dixon have fantasies of terrible gaffes occurring, these fantasies presumably serving to reinforce rules regarding proper conduct. Thus, in a favorite concert play, a "pesceet" ["stuck up"] outsider is portrayed as examining a crofter's cottage for cleanliness and remarking that there is superfluous soot on the ceiling; she places improper syllabic stress on the word "su-

perfluous," showing that she does not have the education that use of a long word implies (and that the audience watching the play by implication does). The outsider's projection of a superior self is thereby punctured.

Occasions when a gaffe almost occurred are nervously talked about for a brief time after the occasion.

> For a day after its occurrence, Dr. Wren tells of having gone into the hotel kitchen and upon seeing a new girl there, almost taking her for Mabel Crown, Mrs. Tate's niece, who was scheduled to come to help out for a few days. The young woman in the kitchen was actually someone from another island, hired for a few weeks as a replacement. Dr. Wren had been acting toward the Tates in the manner of someone who would obviously know which person ought to be associated with the name of Mabel Crown, and had he called the wrong girl Mabel, it would have been difficult to sustain this manner. Ten minutes after almost misnaming the girl, Dr. Wren came into the den where he and other guests were eating. and said in a tone of mixed relief, wonderment, and humor: "I almost made a terrible faux pas; I thought the girl in the kitchen was Mabel Crown."

Occasions when a gaffe has occurred seem to become cautionary tales and are retold for years as a source of humor and as a means of ensuring involvement of participants—and perhaps as a means of playing out a realization of anxieties. Some examples may be given.

> The harbormaster, Jimmy Andrews, is recounting experiences he used to have in his drinking days when the county inspector would arrive unannounced to check up on Andrew's devotion to duty:
> "I mind the time there were a good taw o three boats at the pier and I was sittin at home in me underwear and old pants. And the inspector he comes up in a taxi and comes to the door and asks for Jimmy Andrews. So I say, 'He's at the pier, I expect.' And the driver shouts out, 'Why there's the man himself.' I tell you I almost got the can that time."

> On the island, as in Bergand in general, there is a tendency for the task of any one person to be defined as something any other person who happens to be near ought to lend a hand with. Also, one's body is defined as something that may be crowded next to another's in a lorry or in the cabin of a small boat. Congruent with this pattern, it is customary for the person serving food to help the person being served to a degree not sanctioned in the British middle classes. In the hotel dining room, however, the hotel staff attempts to maintain a middle-class definition of the situation, serving food not ordinarily eaten by crofters and stressing individual portions: individual butter balls are served instead of a single slab of butter, individual jam tarts are served instead of a single pie cut into segments; milk and sugar are served along with the tea, giving each guest an opportunity to express individual taste and self-determination, whereas crofters ordinarily put milk in all cups before serving tea. The scullery boy tells of the time he

was pressed into service as a waiter and put sugar into the tea of one of the guests and mixed it himself.

One Sunday afternoon in the hotel kitchen Mrs. Tate is reminiscing about previous ministers:
"We had this minister who was oh so fiery. He used to preach with his arms waiving around in the air trying to save the folk. And he used to read his sermon from sheets. One time I was sitting in the front and I saw him wave with one hand and turn over the page with the other. I kint then that he was just puttin it on."

Some examples are given below of gaffes that occurred during the research.

During her first few months on the island, the new doctor's wife, Mrs. Wren, was asked to join the Women's Rural Institute and to grace the organization's semi-annual flower show, awarding prizes for the winners in the several competitions. Being in favor of lower-middle class pursuits for the commoners, she consented. In accordance with the established pattern for these matters, a member of the organization who had a good command of standard English read off the name of each winner, and the character of her prize, and then passed the prize to the current president of the organization. The president would then pass the prize to the guest of honor—in this case Mrs. Wren—and she would pass it to the winner, who by then would have come up to the front of the hall in order to receive it. As each winner came up to the front of the hall, Mrs. Wren, following what was expected of her, would smile to the winner in a manner suggesting that she knew the winner by name, and would congratulate her. Since each winner would have to first rise from her chair, and then walk up to the front of the hall, before receiving her prize, it was possible for Mrs. Wren to spot the person to whom she was going to have to smile graciously before the person had come close, and in this way an illusion could be given that the winner was actually known to Mrs. Wren, and that the greeting was a spontaneous consequence of interaction with the winner. One prize, however, was won by the president of the organization, with whom Mrs. Wren, up to that moment, had been carrying on what appeared to be very friendly and informal intercourse. Not knowing the name of the president, Mrs. Wren got her smile ready and looked into the audience to find the person she was to direct it upon. The president tried to save the situation by tugging at Mrs. Wren's arm, but before she could do this everyone was given a glimpse into the fact that the friendliness and familiarity that Mrs. Wren had been showing to the president and to each successive winner was to some extent merely a show. A painful moment of embarrassment followed.

Mr. and Mrs. Tate are away for the evening and the staff is in the hotel kitchen. An elderly male guest knocks at the kitchen door.
Guest: "Can I have a cup of tea, newly infused and hot, and a piece of ginger cake."
Jean: "Yes." (She projects a customary tone of accommodative obedience.)

The guest then closes the door. The staff has been courteous but feels that the old man is over-demanding as well as foolish. They burst out laughing at him when they see that the door is closed, and someone mimics the guest. The guest pops his head back into the kitchen; he has a look of having heard and having understood. He says, "I see you are all happy tonight." The staff becomes completely flustered. The guest's tea is delivered in pained silence. By the next day the staff can retell the incident as a joke.

During billiards one evening twelve persons appear, this being several more than usual and necessarily lowering the total number of games played by each person during the evening. Two men, Tom Clark and Kenneth Burns, both keen lovers of the game, have played two games each and neither has played for three quarters of an hour. Three players who have only played one game apiece and who are persons other players like to play with are about to begin a game. By rules of fairness, either Clark or Burns ought to be the fourth to complete the match. As customary, Clark and Burns each claims that he does not particularly want to play and that the other should go ahead. Three circuits of offers and counteroffers are made by the two men, so that at last the others present are almost convinced that Clark and Burns really don't want to play. Burns finally decides that it will now be safe to accept and picks up a cue in readiness for play. Most of the others present see this action and it is assumed that Burns has now become the fourth for the game and that Clark was not interested in playing or was too polite to play. However Clark apparently does not see Burns' silent act that defined the situation and, picking up a cue, he takes on the air of someone entering the spirit of a game, of someone "talking it up," and he says jokingly, "Well, Jimmy [the player he expects to be partnered with], let's show them." Immediately Clark sees that the situation has been defined with him as a member of the audience, not as a player; he loses countenance and smothers his act as quickly as possible, stepping back from the table and out of the view of most of those present.

In the hotel kitchen during staff lunch, talk turns to the fact that writers and motion picture people always come to Bergand in quest of the most newsworthy lore, i.e., romantic backward peasant customs, and that a false picture of the islands has consequently been created. [The complaint seems quite justified.] Mr. Tate, especially, shows great antagonism to these practices, to the point where the maids and the scullery boy feel he is carrying things too far. Finally Mr. Tate says, "How many folk have running water and electricity even though they have to make their own water." This seems to discredit the standards of propriety that have been assumed in the interplay, albeit the discrediting was patently accidental, and one of the maids and the scullery boy drop their eyes and bend their heads downward in an effort to stop from bursting out laughing.

During socials the practice is sometimes followed of announcing prizewinners and performers by formal naming, e.g., "The second prize has been won by Mr. John Smith" (or Mrs. or Miss Smith). This

custom is especially followed during occasions run by the Women's Rural Institute and during prize-giving at flower and produce shows, for it is at these times that members of the community most selfconsciously practice middle-class roles. Along with formal naming, little speeches of acceptance are given in standard English, and everyone, of course, is dressed "well." Perhaps the chief difference between the kind of middle-class show put on at these times and similar shows that occur in British urban centers is that except for a few outsiders who occasionally attend, all persons present will have previously interacted with one another on the basis of first-naming, work clothes, the Bergand dialect, and crofter tasks, and will do so again when the social occasion is terminated. At one social the master of ceremonies was (as was often the case) Tom Clark, a clerk in the Allens' shop, a young man of crofting origins who is already widely accepted as a community leader and is a central figure in the rising middle class. When the time came to announce the winners of the flower show he left a knot of friends, mounted the stage, and successfully called out the first two winners, who were women, by their formal names. Their dress, his dress, and the manner of all of them properly sustained the air of middle-class respectability that these competitions always project into the situation. The third winner was Jimmy-Andrew Simon, a commoner employed as a baker in the Allen Bakery. Tom Clark and Jimmy-Andrew Simon are neighbors, work in the same building, and are great friends. Clark, like almost all the commoners on the island, calls Simon by his double name. Simon, who was in the knot of friends that Clark had left when he went up to the stage, had worn a formal dark blue suit and was ready to appear on the stage with middle-class dignity. When the time came for his formal name to be announced, Clark could not think of it; he knew who had won the third prize and where the winner was standing but he could not think of the winner as other than Jimmy-Andrew. It was impossible for him to say "Mr. Simon." After a confused pause, Clark finally announced in a stutter, "Jimmy-Andrew Simon." A few minutes later, when Clark returned to his knot of friends, his face was still red from embarrassment, and he said, "I was never so embarrassed, Jimmy-Andrew, I just could not think of thy name."

Mrs. Tate has been testing the staff on a mathematical puzzle printed in the newspaper, introducing a kind of competition in which she is almost certain to excel and in which the cook is almost certain to fail. He does not succeed in solving the problem and Mrs. Tate says, "You're not very good in mathumatics [*sic*], are you?" She does not notice that she has mispronounced "mathematics" and that this mispronunciation belies her assumed familiarity with the discipline. The two maids look at each other collusively behind Mrs. Tate's back, furtively conveying a mocking smile to each other.

The minister of the established Church in Dixon is a man of humble birth from the mainland of Britain. University training has not covered his "common" accent. As is the pattern in Britain, he is given a kind of ceremonial rank of equality by the gentry; he is invited to their larger and more official gatherings. However, for the gentry he is a faulty

person; the person they must treat him as is too far removed from the person they really think he is. He is given to drink and Mrs. Wren has whispered jokingly to her friends that he smells a little for want of a bath. When not in his presence, the gentry use a nickname for referring to him, taking the first syllable of his last name. Sometimes of a Sunday he would come to the hotel for dinner, which he would take with the Wrens. At these times, the gentry would begin by treating him politely but often end the meal by baiting him and almost treating him in an unserious way. Attempts on his part to sanction them for not attending church and thereby maintain some kind of hold over them would not meet with polite apologies but with clear counter-rebukes, expressing the fact that it was not his place to tell them anything. On one occasion, conversation turned to a humorous matter on which the four persons at table (the minister, the Wrens, and the writer) could equally join. Things became merrier and merrier, with everyone accepting the self projected by each of the others. Suddenly the minister got carried away by a joke—carried away a little more than is defined as proper at a middle-class table—and leaned over and lightly slapped Mrs. Wren's back, a slap of goodfellowship. As the blow of familiarity fell, he and the others present realized that the minister's earthier past had presented itself, to the embarrassment of his present self. He withdrew his hand limply, attempting, and failing, to maintain a note of spontaneous involvement, then settling back into customary discomfort for the remainder of the meal.

A common strategy by which individuals dealt with gaffes was suddenly to define the whole situation as unserious and burst into mirth. This seemed to be a way of suddenly introducing new projected selves into the situation, so that it would be possible to treat the discredited ones as a joking matter and still have something to build interaction upon.[3] Frequently this line of adjustment would be initiated by the person who had made the gaffe, especially if he had made it against himself. Only certain gaffes, of course, could be handled in this way. Some examples of the use, successful or unsuccessful, of this strategy may be given.

It is evening in the hotel kitchen and the managers, the Tates, are away. The maids are polishing the guests' shoes and the cook is sweeping the kitchen. The maids have been at the hotel all winter but the cook just started his summer's employments month ago. The maids have been friends since childhood and are on swearing terms with each other, but taboos regarding such matters have not yet (as they will come to be) broken down with the male members of the kitchen staff. Alice drops some polish, gets angry, forgets herself, and says "fuck" out loud. The relation of intimacy signified by premising to-use this word has not yet been established and socially speaking there is no place for the word to fall. There is a hushed moment in the kitchen, and then Alice bursts out laughing. Jean, the other maid, blushes deeply, looks at Alice, and then looks down.

[3] Bergson, in a well-known contribution to the theory of laughter—*Laughter* (London: Macmillan, 1911)—suggests that we laugh when a person behaves as if he were a mechanical object. Freud, in another well-known contribution to an understanding of laughter—"Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious," reprinted in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Random House-Modem Library, 1938)—suggests that we laugh when the occurrence of an event obviates the necessity of suppressing our inclination to have the event occur. From the point of view of this study, both theories seem to be saying the same thing. In the first case, we have an individual who presents himself as someone who is a person and then discredits this projected self by behaving like an object. In the second case we have an individual who presents himself as a person of a given moral status and then inadvertently.

Two men are on a Sunday visit to the home of a third. Their host is returning from across a loch where he has gone to see how his lambs are progressing. He pulls his boat partway up on the shore and looks for a rock to lay on top of the painter. His guests, thirty feet away, watch him looking for such a rock. He finds a large one, weighing about seventy pounds. It is expected that some strain will be expressed as the man, who is of slight build, leans down to pick up the rock. A self under strain is projected for him by the pair who watch him. Instead he lifts the rock up with no apparent strain whatsoever.Both watchers simultaneously and involuntarily look at each other and laugh. While they knew that the man lifting the rock was reputed to be one of the strongest men of the island, they had still projected normal expectations as to how he would appear.

On Wednesday night at eight there is to be a community concert at which John Landor, the local orator, is to give one of his famous extemporaneous speeches. As he is wont to say, he merely gets up on the platform and says whatever comes into his mind. [He has, incidentally, great stage presence and can handle an audience in a very professional way.] So well known are these speeches that the name he uses on the stage is a name often given him off the stage. On the morning after the concert Alice Simon, Landor's niece, tells the following story to a few friends gathered in the hotel kitchen: "Last night I was walkin up the road past Lakeview [her house] about six o'clock and there was Johnny walkin ahead of me, not seein me, givin his speech into the night. Bairns, I thought I'd die."

In the temporary sleeping quarters in the barn behind the hotel the scullery boy is napping. It is late on his afternoon off. Mrs. Tate has to ask him something and wakes him up. Apparently he has been dreaming, for he wakes up startled, expecting to find a world quite different from the one around him. Mrs. Tate expects to see someone whose face expresses the fact that he is in an employee relationship to her, someone ready to engage in the interaction he will find himself in as he awakens. Instead she momentarily sees, by the look in his eyes, a person who has been startled out of a more dignified role. She bursts out laughing and immediately afterward recounts the incident to those in the kitchen.

At a community concert, Tom Clark is reading the names of raffle winners, and Ted Allen, in his customary effort to remain out of the limelight in these matters, is hidden from the audience behind the stage curtain in the role of curtain-puller. Clark receives a ballet from the young girl drawing ballots from a barrel and attempts to read the name on it. The name is badly written, and he fails. In an unthinking effort to keep the show going, Ted Allen comes from his hiding place and tries to read it for him. He suddenly realizes that his effort to show that he is not helping to run the social has been exposed. He turns to the audience, blushes, and gives the audience a broad smile of admission.

2. A gaffe has been defined as a sudden involuntary event which patently discredits a projected self that has already been accepted by

shows that this is not the case. No doubt part of the laughter that is found in such situations arises from the fact that maintenance of a role requires a degree of nervous tension and that sudden breaking of the role acts as a release for this tension—hence the characteristically "nervous" quality of some laughter. However it would seem that sometimes laughter in these situations represents an effort to assimilate the self that has been discredited to an unserious self, one whose discrediting is of little moment. The two roles of laughter are frequently separated in situations where the self that has been discredited is too important to be assimilated to an unserious one. In such cases, nervous laughter on the part of participants may be rigorously repressed and only conveyed by means or collusive looks or by waiting for the offender to leave first. The position could be taken that nervous or spontaneous laughter was a means of saying that the whole situation, and not merely the self of the offender, ought to be defined as unserious

others and built into the interplay. A pretension may be defined as the more or less voluntary projection of a self which from the very beginning is unacceptable to others and which continues, for the period during which the individual is a participant, to inject a false note into the situation. The pretentious projection is unassimilable in the interplay because there is too much variance between the role the actor assumes and what is already known about the actor or what he comes unwittingly to reveal about himself. As Cooley suggests, "If we divine a discrepancy between a man's words and his character, the whole impression of him becomes broken and painful . . . "[4] Other participants may exercise forbearance, so that the offender may never realize he has behaved in an impossible way. Sometimes the offended persons cannot tolerate the discrepancy and refuse to allow the offender to proceed, leaving him in a position of blustering.[5] Examples of both kinds of situations follow.

> The laird's house, "Alexander Hall," a historic landmark in Dixon, is built near the shore of the inlet, and the laird has a stone pier from which the annual boat races are run and off which the laird moors his rowboat. A local thirty-foot fishing boat which an old crofter, Henry Johnson, and his two sons operate during the summer months is usually moored between this pier and the main Dixon pier, some three hundred yards away. The Johnsons decided to moor their boat closer inshore this summer, hence closer than usual to the laird's pier. A few nights after they moored their boat where they wanted to, Henry Johnson, somewhat in his cups at a social, told the following story—a story told and retold many times since then.
> "We put the boat there and the other night I'm walking up to the shop and the laird stops me and says, 'Henry, you've got your boat in the place that you know has always traditionally been the mooring place for Alexander Hall. Would you move it, please.' [Mr. Alexander still has a little of the manner of a laird even though he now has little land left, and little power over the land he possesses. Traditionally it would never have been necessary for an Alexander to raise the question about mooring rights.] So I says to him, 'Do you own the rights to that piece of water; do you have the legal right to make me move my boat?' Wit dat he got sore and red as a beetroot and says, 'Well, if we can't discuss it sensibly there's nothing more to be said,' and he stalks off. He's not back in India ordering niggers around; he can't get away wit that sort of ting now."
> This story is partly confirmed by members the gentry, who say that Mr. Alexander had a scene with old Johnson and that Johnson had refused to remove his boat.

> At a concert in Southend a young man from that community, well known throughout the island, gives a rendition of the song "Quicksilver." He affects a cowboy manner, wearing no tie and strumming a guitar. He attempts to carry off an informal manner and an American accent. After his song he waves his hand and says, "Cheerio, folks. I'll be back." The audience feels that in addition to a song, the performer

[4] Cooley, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

[5] A clear example of blustering is given in W. Lloyd Warner and J. O. Low, *The Social System of the Modern Factory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 145, with an analysis on p. 154. "Fred Jackson, one of the firm of Jones and Jackson, on the other hand, over-participated in the strike with disastrous results to himself and interruptions to the negotiations in progress between the manufacturers and striking employees. Here is the story as Nixon, president of the union, told it to an interviewer (later verified from interviews with management): 'One of the manufacturers, Fred Jackson, a "snappy" young fellow, came into a meeting and slapped a piece of paper down in front of me with a list of things Jones and Jackson proposed as an independent settlement. Jackson said, "I'm going to make you eat that, Nixon." And I said, "Well, I don't happen to like paper, Mr. Jackson." Jackson got very red.and pulled a fifty dollar bill out of his pocket and slammed it down on the desk and said, "You cover that, Nixon, and we'll go downstairs in the mayor's office and whoever comes out first wins." I said, "Don't be so childish, Mr. Jackson." I only had about forty cents in my pocket at the time. The story got to New York and Jackson was called down the next day and fired.' Jackson damaged the cause of management when he tried to fight the head of the union. Everyone said he blustered, and everyone said he acted badly when he challenged union leadership. Jackson was under the control of higher management and occupied an inferior managerial position where he had little freedom to assume command and take leadership. Yet he had learned

was trying to stage a manner as well. It is felt that whatever he was trying, he has not carried it off. Many members of the audience feel embarrassed. Some feel that the performer in question has always put on too many airs. The applause is relatively light. Later in the concert when he comes back to lead the audience in a sing-song, they resist and only fitfully enter the singing. Next morning at the post mortem in the hotel kitchen Jean Andrews says, "When he said, I'll be back,' my face just turned red."

The minister of the established Church is having trouble getting enough people to attend church. Many factors are apparently involved. There has been a long history of collaboration between established clergy and the gentry in Bergand, and both groups were originally recruited, a few hundred years ago, from the mainland of Britain and are in some sense still outsiders. Further, the local gentry have not sufficiently supported the established Church in Dixon, tending to attend only on ceremonial occasions such as Christmas, and the church has failed in its traditional role of being a place of meeting and a place of integration of commoner and gentry. (The community hall and the Allens' shop are the real centers of the community.) On some occasions, as few as six persons attend a Sunday service. The minister is then required to deliver a sermon that takes its tone and form from an institutionalized mode of discourse appropriately designed for an audience larger than forty. The minister finds himself projecting a self that would be appropriate for an orator to present before a sizable audience. The few persons actually present sense the discrepancy and feel embarrassed.

A wedding is being held. The groom is a man in his thirties who lost his first wife through sickness. The bride is a young woman who is the unmarried mother of a sixteen-year-old boy. Both persons are highly esteemed in the community. At the ceremony the bride is dressed in full wedding apparel, of the kind that would do credit to a middle-class wedding anywhere in Britain. She wears a white dress and veil, traditional symbols of virginity. For some persons at the wedding this is a presumption and causes them some embarrassment.

Alice Simon's boy friend, John Neil, is away on an eight-month voyage. During his absence, they confirm, by correspondence, their intention of getting married [which they have since done]. Alice is an attractive girl, and during John's absence two difficult situations arise.
The previous year a man who had come to the island to watch birds, and who had stayed his two weeks at the hotel, had escorted Alice to the community hall during evenings, had spent some time in the kitchen when the Tates were away, and had shown other innocent interest in Alice's company. The day he arrived for his second annual visit was the day Alice was scheduled to receive a long distance call from John, and the staff had been oriented all day toward the coming call and its implications. Immediately upon his arrival at the hotel, the bird-watcher came into the kitchen and asked the cook where Alice was (she was out at the moment). His tone signified an eager expectation that his relation with Alice would be the same, or more

from William Pierce when he worked for him how his kind of man should act, and he knew that an owner and manager should assume control. It seems a reasonable hypothesis that the conflict between his beliefs about how a man should act (how Mr. Pierce would do it) and what he was remitted to do by his status greatly contributed to causing his unfortunate act, an act which materially aided the union. He tried to take command in a situation where it was impossible, and he could only 'bluster.' "

intimate, than the year before. The staff felt embarrassed. As the cook said the next day, "Dus du kin, I was embarrassed, for I do like that boy. I just did not know what to say."

The other incident was perhaps more serious. For years a local commoner had been enamored of Alice and desirous of marrying her, a fact that was rather widely known. At a time when Alice's relation to John had been confirmed, the disappointed suitor misread the signals and on the occasion of a Christmas visit presented Alice with a wrist watch as a Christmas present. On the island, an investment of that kind is a ratified symbol of engagement. Alice was forced to refuse the gift, although she could do nothing about the giver's having publicly committed himself to the expectation of engagement to her. The disappointed suitor could do nothing but take himself unseriously for the remainder of the evening, playing the fool over a matter that was felt to be too serious for anybody to attempt to resolve in this way. As the participants later agreed, it was a painful evening.

An engineering company has sent a man to direct test drilling on the island for chromate ore. He is a very hard worker, his wife is very much liked, and he has no "side." However, from the islander's point of view he is a very faulty person. Time after time during informal interplay he will immediately charge in with a recital of how the drilling is going. He projects an assumption that those present are aware of the state of drilling reached the previous day, of the vocabulary of drilling, and of the contingencies of the job. Talk that would be meaningful and perhaps interesting to his crew, were they already engaged in shoptalk, he employs as a first message with persons who know nothing about the job. He gives a constant impression of presumptuous self-concern. The islanders handle the situation by tactfully attempting to act as if they are interested, answering his statements with terminal echos such as "Yea, yea." They felt that he felt they ought to be interested in the development of the island's resources, but they were shocked at his undue preoccupation with his own task.

John Adamson, a man of about forty-two, is a regular billiards player. He is not a member of the rising middle class to the degree that almost all the other players are, nor does he associate informally with the other players at other times to the degree that the others do. When non-players learn that Adamson is a regular player they sometime ask, "What's he doing there?" Whatever his position, the regular players feel that he shows too much eagerness in play, and while other players are also guilty of this offense he, perhaps more than others, attempts to maintain a show of not being overly-involved. The impression his expressive behavior gives is inconsistent with his linguistic behavior, and the discrepancy causes some tension among the others and brings some dysphoria to the interplay. Thus, when the question arises as to who'll play the next game, he follows the polite rules and disclaims any desire to play, but there is a feeling that he is patently insincere and that he too willingly allows himself to be pushed into playing next. When he hits a ball he makes the customary claim that it is a poor shot, but he keeps on watching the ball until it has come to a dead stop,

> instead of expressing unconcern by turning away from the table if the shot is fairly certain not to score. He loudly disclaims the possibility of making a shot for which he is known to have sufficient skill, thus seeming to build up a situation in which credit will come to him. The gentleman's agreement rule in billiards not to directly sink the opponent's ball is broken by him before the tension and definition of the situation has reached a point where this aggressive act is thoroughly acceptable; or he makes too much of not exercising an opportunity to sink an opponent's ball, giving the impression that he has refrained from sinking it merely to demonstrate that he is playing in the proper spirit. In general, it is felt that close behind the self he projects of someone who is taking the game in the right spirit is a self that is too eager.

It is to be understood, of course, that the same act on the part of a particular sender may be quite acceptable to one set of recipients and yet another set of recipients may feel that the actor has been pretentious. Thus, during community concerts, a local spinster gives a solo singing performance that islanders take seriously and think highly of. By city standards, however, the woman's voice is so bad and her manner of delivery is so "old-fashioned" that visitors to the island either mistake the performance for a conscious satire or find it difficult not to laugh. For the outsiders, the woman's full-throated dramatic rendition is a pretension to, and a presumption of, talent which outsiders feel she does not possess.

Another example may be cited. While islanders seem to be no more superstitious than many members of the working classes in British cities, still there are occasions when adults will discuss with full seriousness the arguments for and against the existence of "second sight," that is, the capacity to know in advance that an event will take place (especially dire events), or to know at a distance that a given event has taken place. Sometimes the exploits of islanders known for their capacity in this regard will be cited as positive evidence. There is among the current adolescents of the community, especially among some of the boys, a wholly rationalistic orientation to such matters as "second sight." These persons assume that no full-fledged adult could hold superstitious beliefs, and in talking to anyone they seem to talk on the assumption that the person they are speaking to is not a superstitious person. When the question of supernatural powers is seriously discussed in the presence of these young people, they often find it hard to "keep a straight face" and behave politely. They give each other sly, furtive looks conveying their attitude on these matters; sometimes they cannot trust themselves to do this and carefully cast their eyes down. For them, an individual who talks in a serious fashion about supernatural powers is not a person at all, and the failure of the superstitious speaker

to realize that he is not behaving as a full-fledged person is, for the unbelievers, a laughable rigidity and a self-delusion.

* * * * *

During interplay among commoners in Dixon, unacceptable projections seem to be limited by two factors. First, all residents of the island possessed a great deal of information about one another, so that it was quite impractical for individuals to make verbal claims for themselves which their life apart from the interplay did not support. It would seem that the more difficult it is for an individual to "get away" with a falsehood about himself, the less likely he is to attempt to do so, and the less frequently these falsehoods are attempted, the less opportunity, presumably, there is for gaffes or pretensions to occur. Secondly, there is a strong tendency for all commoners to define themselves first and foremost as Bergand crofters and to be ready at any time to show loyalty to this grouping. Allegiance is shown in the main by not putting on airs—by not being "pesceet," as the islanders call it. Since crofters are recognized to be a low and humble group, those who avow this status have no place to fall.

Perhaps the most frequent kind of unacceptable projection was one produced by outsiders during interplay with islanders—one that the producer usually remained unaware of having produced. Islanders as a whole possessed much information about the physical layout of the island[6] and about the administrative routine by which it was operated. And there is current in both sexes a wide familiarity with croft tools and croft techniques. Furthermore, as islanders themselves claim, nearly every man has a wide range of specialized skills, such as carpentry, garage mechanics, and seamanship. This information and training has come for the islanders to be an expected attribute of man as such. An individual—especially a male adult—who enters interplay is automatically assumed to enter with a self qualified in these ways. Thus, outsiders who ask questions about the island, or show lack of familiarity with its routine of activity, or make an effort to perform an island task, or touch a boat of any kind, inevitably discredit the self that has been implicitly imputed to them by the islanders. When outsiders display these shortcomings and at the same time express an air of urban assurance and superiority to islanders, they become especially laughable to the islanders, although of course they are rarely laughed at out loud.

[6] This seems to be rapidly declining today. Fifty years ago, when the population was more scattered throughout the island, proper names were current for many small landmarks, knolls, hills, crags, and inlets. Today even the generic terms for some of these identifiable formations are passing out of use.

## Unserious Disruptions

It has been suggested that gaffes are sometimes handled by defining the situation in an unserious way, so that the self that is discredited can in someway be dissociated from the person whose self it was. In Dixon much use seemed to be made of this possibility as a source of fun. Instead of resolving an embarrassing situation by introducing an unserious definition of the situation, disruptive events are purposely engineered so that an embarrassing situation will arise, but care is taken to ensure that an unserious view of it will be taken. Three varieties of this behavior may be mentioned.

1. In Dixon many households have a member who is recognized for his ability to "take off," as they say, on others. This refers to the practice of mimicking an individual or "taking" his role in circumstances where his response can be taken as characteristic of him and especially of his failings. Mimics in Dixon seem to be very skilled and frequently succeed in copying the physical posture, the facial expressions, and the accent and intonation of another, as well as the linguistic content of his response at a characteristic moment. The amount of laughter that a mimic evokes from his audience appears to vary according to the accuracy of his gestural copy and the number of behavior levels that he is able to bring into the gestural portrait. Certain mimics become famous in a neighborhood circle for their treatment of a given individual, and at small gatherings they will be coaxed to perform their specialties. Mimics and their audience clearly recognize that a mere linguistic repetition of a person's statement will not evoke laughter. Obviously, the self projected in this way into the interaction is neither one's own nor that of the person being mimicked and is necessarily unsustainable.

2. Another favorite source of humor on the island is what is called "leg-pulling." The typical pattern is for an individual who is to be the butt or goat of the joke to be given information which others present know to be false or unsound. The butt is then led into projecting attitudes, responses, and actions which would be acceptable and creditable were the information true. Sooner or later during the interplay the butt learns that the information has been false and that, consequentially, the self he has projected into the interplay is necessarily untenable and ludicrous. It is a crucial feature of the game that the butt does catch on or that a truthful disclosure is finally made to him. As previously suggested, the person responsible for building up the false impression in the first place usually makes sure that someone else is present who can be let in on the joke, thus ensuring that the butt will have to define the situation, after he sees through the game, as only a game. The spirit of the game requires the butt

to do a big take of confusion and shock upon learning that he has been "had," and persons who almost get seriously angered are the best and favorite subjects. The moment of chagrin when the butt "catches on" is the high point of the game. Presumably spontaneous involvement of those in the know derives from the fact that were the unsustainable projection done in serious life, great embarrassment and chagrin would result.

Leg-pulling is of sociological interest not merely because it illustrates the effects of projecting a self that is patently inconsistent with reality but for two additional reasons. First, men of full adult status in the community, who had a wife, children, and no peculiarities, were considered too dignified to have their leg pulled, except on April First, even though many would have liked to make fun of them in this way. Persons below the age of about twelve are considered too easy to dupe, and apparently have too little to lose by the loss of their dignity to make the game worthwhile; they are not fair game. Persons entering adult status, and, especially, persons who are old enough to have achieved adult status but have for some reason failed to do so, are favorite butts for the game. Secondly, in order to make a prospective butt fall into the trap of belief, it was sometimes necessary for players of the joke to exercise very impressive skill in the control of what are usually thought of as the purely involuntary expressive components of behavior. So skilled are some islanders in doing this that one feels they do not feign expressive behavior during serious occasions because there would be a strong negative sanction for being caught doing it, not because of incapacity to do so. Apparently the fear of being caught out acts as an involuntary disturbance in the art of feigning, and when things have been arranged so that the sanction against false communication does not apply unexpected ability at feigning is shown.

One variety of leg-pull on the island is what has sometimes been called "sending persons on a fool's errand." Thus, the shops being closed Wednesdays, a favorite pastime is to ask someone in the house to run down to the shop to pick something up. If the person asked does not immediately "catch on," he usually either projects a self that is willing and happy to be accommodative or projects a self that has other immediate objections and can't oblige; in either case, sociological disaster is inevitable, since he conveys to those present a self that has accepted and adjusted to the right and obligation of doing a favor or a chore, and then finds that there was no basis for the projection. Every household seems to have a store of tales, often retold, of classic leg-pulls. A few examples follow:

> One afternoon in the hotel kitchen talk turns to famous leg-pulls. Mrs. Tate says: "I remember once we decided to get one on Mary [a

> former maid at the hotel]. So once when two men [hotel guests] had geen on the o'erland early [early-morning overland transportation] we set the clocks back and made up the bed clothes to look like they were still there and then roused her and told her if they didn't hurry they'd sure be late, and she went and knocked and got no answer so she went in, saw the figure and come out and knocked agin—went and shook the figure. My we laughed."
>
> Later in the conversation Mrs. Tate says, "Once we had a girl from Torin [another island in the Bergand group] to help and my she was slow. Finally, I could stand it no longer and I asked her to go to James [Mr. Tate] in the garage and get some elbow grease. He said his was all dirty and sent her to the shop."
>
> Alice comments: "Like the time they sent Willi [one of the community's brasher young men] to the shop for short circuits and John [a mild-mannered clerk] asked Alex [the manager] if they had any."

It maybe noted that the practice of leg-pulling also appeared in an organized form during games held at large house parties. As previously suggested, the form of the game required that a butt (or sequence of butts) be chosen, and that the remainder of those present be in on the joke. Ordinarily a half dozen or so young persons would be kept outside a room while the joke was being explained to persons in the room. As each butt learned the secret by having the joke played on him, he would be added to the audience, and another butt would take his place from those chosen to wait outside. In general, the game consisted of involving the butt in what felt like one line of action while in fact it was another. At the crisis or peak of the game, the butt discovers that he has been projecting a self fitted to one set of facts and that in reality another set holds. The more chagrin and embarrassment he shows, the greater becomes the spontaneous involvement of the audience. Interestingly enough, persons upon whom such games were played often saw through the game, or did not feel it funny, and yet would affect a show of doing a big take when the proper time came.

3. When persons gather for interplay in Dixon, it is assumed that each participant is deserving of certain kinds of approval and protection by the other participants and that acts which aptly express disrespect for him will be inhibited or avoided Thus, at the crudest level, one participant does not shove or push another unless there is a clearly honorable reason for doing so. When the situation has been defined unseriously, participants have an opportunity to engage in horseplay; they have an opportunity to commit just those acts of disrespect against each other that would ordinarily be cause for great offense. Presumably the strong feeling such acts would create in serious interplay is a source of spontaneous involvement during

unserious interplay.[7] In any case, we have a practice of what might be called ritual profanation. The image of himself that a participant projects as someone deserving of fundamental respect is purposely and playfully discredited. At billiards, when the time is right for it, a player's cue is pushed from behind by someone he cannot see so that the stroke by which his skill was to have been expressed is made to look ludicrously clumsy, in much the same sense that a boy who is tripped by another is made to discredit the expectation that he can carry himself like a person. Or, at billiards, the player is purposely "put in balk" by the player before him, so that his expectations of having his playing self treated with consideration are sharply disappointed. At a community dance, an eight-year-old would venture closer and closer to an elderly drunk man until he finally tweaked the man's hair and ran away in excitement. In the kitchen of the hotel, the employees on occasion tease each other in all manner of ways. For example, the cook would be kidded about not having a girl, the scullery boy about having one. The maids would kick the cook; jump on him from behind; tweak his legs; put buttons, salt, and cookies in his tea; smear him with lipstick and bath salts; flick their fingers at his ears; put soapy hands down his neck; twirl a wet boiler lid at him; throw his cap away; turn his back pockets out; pull him out of bed; and put their hands into his front pockets. They would also tell him that his cooking was bad. He, in his turn, would chase the maids, slap them across the neck with a fresh piece of meat, look through their purses and pull out cosmetics, grab them and soundly kiss them.

Interestingly enough, islanders sometimes acted towards themselves during interplay in such a way as unseriously to discredit their own claims to respect. At certain times a participant would act in such a way as to make himself rather than anyone else look foolish; he would play the buffoon. In missing an easy shot, a billiard player would loudly curse himself, until other players started to laugh. In being teased, a person would do an almost serious take, showing violent loss of composure. And when it was known that an individual had "had a few drams," he would wildly act the fool for the amusement others. It seemed, in effect, that persons would at times sacrifice their own dignity in an unconscious desire to keep amusement and interest in the interplay from lagging.

Ritual profanation, like leg-pulling, seemed to find an organized form in party games. In one game, for example, a person in the center of a large circle of persons spins a pan and once the pan has started spinning calls out a number which corresponds to some one of the players. The player must rush from the outside of the circle and grab the pan before it stops spinning or pay a forfeit. To get to

[7] See chapter xix for a discussion of strategies ensuring sufficient involvement.

the pan in time, the person whose number is called has to drop his dignity and scramble as fast as he can. The more he disobeys the rules of acting in an orderly fashion, the more laughter is created in the audience. In another game a young unmarried man and woman are blindfolded and each is given a spoon and a bowl of jello and instructed to feed the other. In consequence, the faces of both and the breasts of the girl are ritually profaned to a surprising degree. The butts' assumptions of cleanliness and modesty are wonderfully discredited. This game is extremely successful, and if the players go through their part with some seriousness, the audience can become extremely involved in a joking way. In another game, called "Beetle," a high score and a chance for a prize is achieved by shouting out "beetle" as soon as a certain sequence of numbers has been reached by the roll of a pair of dice, there being two teams of two for each pair of dice. To win the game one must seize the dice-cup as soon as one's opponent has laid it down and shout "beetle" as soon as the sequence is attained. To win the game persons forget themselves and blindly grasp the cup as soon as possible. A climax is reached when the first person to achieve the proper sequence shouts "beetle" in a completely uncontrolled, unseemly way. Thus the players discredit in a joking context the assumption that they are in control of their passions

During community dances a pattern of ritual profanation was also employed as a means of ensuring involvement. In Lancers and Quadrilles the "swing your partner" figure always managed push some of the female dancers past the limit of seemly involvement, into a scene where they and others would take an unserious view of their loss of equilibrium and self-control. In another dance, the last figure is danced to an ever-increasing tempo until all the dancers lose their balance and self-direction.

# *Chapter XXIII: The Management of Projected Selves*

doi

During interplay, events may occur which make it difficult for participants to accept in an unthinking way the self projected by someone among them, or to continue to accept a projected self which they had initially accepted in this way. On such occasions dysphoria is likely to occur. The conscious realization that a projected self has not been or is no longer spontaneously accepted—whether this realization comes to the person whose projected self is not accepted or to the others—is likely to heighten the dysphoria.

During interplay in Dixon, individuals exercise tact or social strategies in order to maintain interactional euphoria. Some of these strategies are preventive, serving to avoid threats to the interplay; some are corrective, serving to compensate for dangers that have not been successfully avoided. These strategies may be employed by the individual causing the disturbance (if, in fact, it is felt that some one person in particular is at fault) or by individuals for whom such a disturbance is caused. When these strategies are successfully employed, social harmony in the interactional order is maintained or restored. Of course, a person who acts in such a way as to contribute to the euphoria in an interplay may act from many different motives and intentions. Some typical strategies are reviewed here, illustrations being provided for a few of them.

## Discretion

A gaffe has been defined as any act which precipitously discredits a projected self that has been accepted in an interplay. Of the many kinds of gaffes, two varieties seemed to stand out clearly.

First, there were what are sometimes called "boners," where the person responsible for the gaffe is also the person whose projected self is discredited. Boners themselves vary in the degree to which the self that is discredited is a self of which those who had initially accepted it were suspicious and doubtful. Islanders employed two preventive strategies regarding boners: they made an effort to ex-

press modesty wherever possible, and they took care not to appear in situations where a boner was likely, as during an appearance on the community hall stage, unless they felt sufficiently poised to do so. And as described in the previous chapter, they employed the corrective strategy of defining in an unserious way a situation in which they had made a boner.

Secondly, there were what are sometimes called "bricks," where the person responsible for the gaffe is not the person whose projected self is discredited. Strategies for preventing the occurrence of bricks seemed to be an aspect of tact which islanders were conscious of as tact and about which they had explicit expectations. Islanders felt that adults ought to have their wits sufficiently about them not to create what they called "faux pas."

During interplay in Dixon, every participant seemed to project a self into interaction which the mention of some facts of his past life would embarrass. These facts were usually not major ones, as may be found in urban situations where social practices such as "passing" are possible, nor were they sufficiently important so that the mere knowing of them by the participants would discredit the person to whom they applied. But they were sufficiently important so that if they were raised at an inopportune time, they would cause the individual (and sometimes others) to lose his poise and feel ill at ease, bringing to the interplay some constraint and dissonance. A very general form of tact practiced on the island was the avoidance of mention of anything which would bring to any participant's attention facts about himself which he found at the moment embarrassing. Islanders have an intimate knowledge of each other's "sore points" and are thus in a position to avoid them. The betrothal of a man and woman would not be mentioned before the rejected suitor. Questions of paternity would not be raised in the presence of a bastard. Strong views on politics or religion would not be voiced until the politics and religion of all participants had been tactfully established.

Discretion was also exercised in avoiding interplay with persons under circumstances which might make it difficult for them to sustain the self they would be likely to project.[1] Thus, an old crofter who had no land and who made no attempt to keep his cottage clean was provided with hot meals by the neighbors around him, the meals being brought to his cottage and handed to him at the door. A woman who had lived across the road from him for more than ten years suggested that she always got "one of the bairns" to deliver the meal because she felt the old man would be embarrassed if she came and saw how the inside of his house looked.[2]

In the case of strangers from off the island, whose past life could not be thoroughly known, care had to be taken to stay off topics that

[1] See the reference to "avoidance relationships" in chapter xx.

[2] on the occasion when a section of the community was being canvassed for contributions to the postman's retirement gift, the same woman argued that the canvasser ought to collect some money from the old man because while he might not be able to afford it as well as some of the others (he was on relief) he would feel hurt if he thought be had been omitted.

while not known to be embarrassing could be embarrassing. Thus, the islanders were sufficiently tactful towards strangers not to inquire into matters such as religion but to stay off the topic and wait for information to be volunteered, thereby illustrating Simmel's dictum that discretion "... consists by no means only in the respect for the secret of the other, for his specific will to conceal this or that from us, but in staying away from the knowledge of all that the other does not expressly reveal to us."[3] Persons on the island exercised the kind of tact that is calculated to make it easier for others not to be tactless. Newcomers to the island are warned before it is too late as to what not to talk about before whom, this warning coming either from the sensitive person himself or from an interested third party. For example, Mr. Alexander's wife (not on the island) was a Catholic. Catholicism could be discussed in his presence but not in the same way it was discussed in his absence. The gentry took care to warn their visiting friends of this fact so as to "avoid embarrassment."

[3] Simmel, *op. cit.*, pp. 320–321. A functional implication of this kind of tact is, of course, that the strangers voluntarily provide information to others of the kind they will require in handling them.

## Hedging

During interplay in Dixon, many individuals frequently employ the preventive strategy of never committing themselves, fully and irrevocably, upon an issue—whether the issue directly reflects upon the self-image of the participants or does so only indirectly. Participants tended to take care to involve themselves and commit themselves judiciously, not allowing themselves to become clearly identified in the eyes of the others with a self-image which unanticipated communications might contradict.[4] No matter how sure they are of the propriety of their acts, they hold themselves back a little; they hedge a little; they attempt to maintain a margin of safety. Thus, if an unanticipated communication occurs which is inconsistent with the positions that have been taken, it is still possible for participants to act as if the positions in question were not fully or unreservedly taken. Communicated valuations may thus come to grief without bringing a similar fate to the person who conveyed them; salvage is possible.

One of the most interesting variants of the strategy of hedging is found in what might be thought of as exploratory communication, or the process of feeling a person out. The sender takes a position on a particular matter in an ambiguous or mild way. If the recipient responds with no encouragement, the sender is in a position to claim that the valuation was not important to him, or that it was not meant in the way the recipient took it. If the recipient responds with encouragement, then the sender is in a position safely to add a little more weight and clarity to his initial valuation. In this way the sender can go through a sequence of steps, committing himself a lit-

[4] During interplay it was frequently assumed that all those present were in agreement with each other on fundamental impersonal issues and that, by implication, every participant was the sort of person who would hold the accepted view on a given issue. The occurrence of open disagreement on particular issues led participants to feel that they had unjustifiably taken a sympathetic view of each other. The sudden occurrence of disagreement obliged talkers to "back down" in the interests of maintaining a show of harmony, requiring a speaker to fumble with the tone of assurance and authority that had been in his voice. Expressed disagreement, then, was a threat to the selves that had been projected into the situation. An important exception occurs in interplays that are specifically designed to provide an opportunity for argumentation of a disinterested, dispassionate kind. In such a context, disagreement over impersonal issues need not disturb the working acceptance, providing the participants take their disparate stands in accordance with the rules for cool-headedness and disinterest.

tle more with each step but always remaining within a safe distance of what is an acceptable position. Thus, with respect to any single continuum of expressed valuation, no matter which one of the two participants is first to call a halt, the other is left with a manageable or defensible position. Exploratory communication occurs frequently in courting situations and in the "placing" interplay by which two newly acquainted persons learn about each other's statuses without either person conveying (at any one stage in the process) a standard of judgment that is embarrassingly damaging to the other or embarrassingly revelatory of himself.

A common form of exploratory communication occurred in Dixon with respect to requests for favors and the giving of orders. If a favor was asked of someone, and the person asked felt obliged to refuse, then the asker was put in the position of having been presumptuous, assuming more friendliness or good will than actually existed. In order to avoid the appearance of such discrepancies, persons asked for a favor usually acceded or, if not, provided a very understandable excuse for refusing. Persons who wanted to ask a favor knew this to be the case and did not want to put others in the position of feeling forced to accede in order to maintain euphoria.[5] Hence favors were often asked in a roundabout way, so that they could be refused before the asker had committed himself to a self of someone asking a favor. Thus if someone was to be asked to go to the shop to make a purchase, the asker would first inquire of the other if he were going down the road. The answer, "No, not just now," would end the interchange without either person having placed himself in an embarrassing situation. If the answer was, "Yes, I am," then the request to bring something back from the shop could be made with relative safety. So, too, when one person was acting as guest-worker, his host would usually say, "You can do this next if you if you want," instead of commanding him. Similarly, if the managers of the hotel wished to visit relatives for a night they would ask a member of the staff who was entitled to have that time off if he was doing anything that night.

[5] See references to the "After you, Alphonse," interchange, chapter xxi.

In Dixon, and perhaps throughout Britain, many persons are interested in obtaining a little more than their legal share of rationed foods and materials, and many supply sources have something extra to distribute. A code has apparently developed whereby the customer can convey the fact that more than the ration would be desired without presenting a self that might have to be refused and, by implication, found illegal, or greedy, or immoral. The server says, "How much would you like?", a phrase which can mean, "How much of your ration do you want?" or "If there were no rations to think of, how much would you want? " Customers frequently reply in a lighthearted way, "As much as I can get," thus making a joke of the situ-

ation and at the same time conveying something that can mean, "As much as I can legally get on my ration book" as well as what it usually means. They frequently add a sly wink to the nearest customer as guarantee that they are not being "serious." The server is then in a position to offer the customer an extra amount, or to say, "We only have such and such," or "You can have half a pound on each book" (this being the legal amount). In either case the customer is in a position to act as if he has not projected demands of an inappropriate kind. Further, if the customer feels righteous and says, "Only what I am allowed," the server is in a position to act as if he, too, is following the legal code.

## Politeness

In an early part of this study, it was suggested that individuals may be viewed as sacred objects; they can be offended or pleased by events which have an expressive significance even though not an instrumental one, and signs of approval and disapproval can be found or sought in every event that occurs in their presence.

In entering interplay in Dixon, each participant seemed to estimate roughly the degree to which he would be approved and the basis of the approval and lower his defenses, as it were, to a corresponding degree. Thus, if one participant conveyed sharp approval or disapproval of another participant, the judged participant was likely to become ill at ease and become more self-consciously concerned with himself than is thought proper. While islanders recognize moral and expediential [*sic*] reasons for not being too explicit in their approval and disapproval of others present, they also seemed to be motivated by a desire to prevent the embarrassment—the interactional dysphoria—that might be a consequence of such expressed judgments. Thus, an image of what might and might not give offense to another is a principal guide for one's conduct in interplay.

## Unseriousness

Perhaps the most frequently employed social strategy in Dixon, both as a preventive and a corrective measure, was the introduction of an unserious definition of the situation. If an individual found that he had been implicitly or explicitly assigned a role that he was not sure he could properly carry through, he would joke about his incapacity so that if he did fail those present would feel that the self that had been discredited was not the individual's basic or real self. If he committed a gaffe, or if another participant committed one that was not

too serious, he could introduce an unserious definition of the situation in an effort to restore harmony. If a sender conveyed something that suddenly appeared to give offense or that might possibly give offense, he could act as if it were only meant in jest.[6] If a communication was received that was unacceptable to him, he could avoid open disagreement by replying with unserious agreement or unserious disagreement. In all of these cases, the person who used the strategy could only be accused of a breach in taste, that is, he could only be accused of being unserious at the wrong time or about the wrong thing. The ability to employ this strategy so as not to allow a potentially discreditable self to be given temporary credit was part of what seemed to be implied in the phrase "to have a sense of humor."

[6] Doyle, *op. cit.*, p. 79, gives an example: "A slave, in case of a breach of etiquette or duty, could laugh, as a sign that no offense had been intended."

When, for example, a person asked for a second helping of food, he often did so in a tone that approximated baby-speech, presumably showing that the self that was asking for food was not the actor's real self and could be thought greedy without disturbing the situation. In the same way, when men got a little drunk and exercised extra prerogatives in their behavior, they would make sure to slur their voices, even though this may not have been inevitable, showing that the improperly conducted self was not a real one.

## Sangfroid

It has been suggested that improper involvement is a contagious thing, that when one participant feels ill at ease a conscious realization by others that this is the case is likely to disturb their involvement also. The capacity to conceal signs of interactional discomfort is sometimes called "sangfroid. " Concealment of this kind breaks the vicious-circle effect of embarrassment and constitutes a kind of tact. Two examples may be given.

> During a community concert in Dixon about twelve six to eight-year-old children are singing in chorus; their teacher is accompanying them on the piano, which is on the stage. The electric lights, which have just replaced gas-pressure lamps, fail for a moment. The audience becomes momentarily disoriented and there is an immediate, though quite light, murmur throughout the audience. The pianist plays a little louder and the school children go on singing, exactly as if nothing had happened. In a moment the audience is again silent and the lights go on.

> During a political meeting at which a county candidate was speaking, Dr. and Mrs. Wren arrived late. They entered a situation in which all members of the audience were formally defined as equal, a definition borne out by the fact that the island's business family, the Allens, sat on the same kind of benches and with no better point of vantage than the assembled audience of crofters enjoyed, and that after the speech crofters spoke up and asked questions with much the same confidence

> as shown by the gentry in asking questions. Close to the speaker there were two chairs, and as the Wrens entered a crofter sitting near the end of a bench near the chairs got up and pointed to the chairs, inviting the Wrens to take a place of preference. This action forced everyone to remember that preferential participation rights were once accorded to the gentry and that agreement no longer existed as to proper conduct in these matters. Dr. Wren laughed lightly and quickly answered the invitation by saying that he was so big no one would be able to see through him so he should best sit on the bench. The audience relaxed. After the meeting, he admitted to his wife and the writer that the offer had been a damn-fool thing and that privileges "like that would never do."

Presumably this social strategy differs from some other kinds of tact in that a mere desire to exert it is not in itself sufficient; trained capacity is required.[7] Islanders seemed to differ widely in their capacity to remain cool under social fire.

[7] Romantic literature and etiquette books regularly attribute this capacity to the best classes. To the writer's knowledge, no one has actually studied the minute-to-minute behavior of a social elite to discover whether in fact the members do practice this (and other) tactful strategies more than do members of other classes.

## Feigned Indifference

Individuals base their projected selves upon certain positively valued attributes. It has been suggested that contingencies may occur which demonstrate that a particular individual has radically more or radically less of a given attribute than his activity up to then implied. The practice of feigning indifference is a preventive strategy for overcoming this danger. It was much used in Dixon. By feigning indifference to an attribute, the individual could project and establish a self-image in which the attribute played no part. Once this image was overtly accepted by others, then failure (or too much success) with respect to the particular attribute ceased to be an uncontrolled source of embarrassment; the working acceptance based on the projected self was not disrupted because the projected self had been originally defined in such a way as to exclude the attribute that was later brought into question.[8]

[8] From the point of view of the others, the individual who feigns indifference acts like a person who has what he wants and doesn't want what he hasn't got. (When this maneuver begins to convince the very person who performs it, we have, presumably, a variant of a major structural element in social life, namely, pride.) The practice of feigning indifference serves as a means of self defense for the person who employs it, but it serves many different important functions for the interplay in which it is performed. For example, it seems that informal interplay could not smoothly perform certain of its social functions unless unwanted participants could be relied upon to withdraw voluntarily from the interplay (or voluntarily ab-

## Non-Observance

In Dixon, another strategy used to cope with embarrassing situations is for all concerned to act as if the disruptive, discrediting event had not in fact occurred. Individuals acted as if they had not seen or heard the discrediting event. It is interesting to note that a conflict sometimes arose, as in the case of stomach growls, burps, or the dropping of a piece of food, as to which strategy to employ: whether to act as if the event had not occurred or to recognize that it had occurred and that it was to be made a joke of. Frequently the tension and dysphoria on such occasions was created not by the offending

act itself but rather by the state of suspension the participants found themselves in, waiting for the offender to define which strategy he, and hence they, would have to take.

Just as non-observance served as a means of maintaining a self another had already projected, so a kind of non-observance occurred in response to a person who acted with patent pretensions. If the projected self was too serious for others to laughingly discredit, as by employing the phrase "come off it," then to save the situation participants were often required to act as if they in fact did not sense a discrepancy between the self projected and the self they knew or felt to exist. For example, when a visitor to the island or a small child showed undue enthusiasm, projecting a self that put too much stock in what was for the adult islander a small matter, the offender would be answered with a show of feigned enthusiastic interest. Similarly, when a husband told anecdotes to his friends, projecting an image of someone making a fresh and spontaneous contribution to the interplay, his wife and others present who had already heard the same person tell the same story with the same show of spontaneous involvement, would tactfully act as if it were all new to them and do an appropriate "take" when the climax of the tale was reached.[9]

Brief reference may be made to three other strategies employed in Dixon. When a participant inadvertently acted in such a way as to disrupt or discredit his projected self, he sometimes attempted to ease the situation by providing a rationalization for his act. A rationalization may be defined as a causal explanation offered by an offender in order to account for his offense in a way which provides an unapparent but acceptable reason for it. An alternative sometimes employed was for the offender to become aggressively self-righteous and attempt to establish the fact that his gaffe really represented a proper way of behaving and that the others were themselves acting improperly if they felt that the self they had accepted for the participant was consistent with the self implied in the gaffe. Finally, the offender sometimes employed the alternative of becoming over-apologetic. He would commit himself fully to an act of exorcism and apology, attempting to persuade the others present that he was at one with them in their attitude to the infraction and that one part of him, at least, was not the sort of person who would tolerate the offense in question.

stain from entering) on the basis of slight hints conveyed to them by other participants. Slight hints do not disrupt the most intimately defined working acceptance; all the participants can overtly maintain a spirit of friendliness and affability. And yet within such a context, a participant who is willing to take a hint can be led voluntarily to accept extreme deprivations. From the point of view of the interplay, a participant's sensitivity to hints means that he is tractable and manageable; from the point of view of the participant himself, it means an opportunity to protect himself by feigning indifference.

[9] Other illustrations are given in chapter xix.

# *Interpretations and Conclusions*

## The Interaction Order

In the study of social life, it is common to take the concept of social order as central and to analyze concrete behavior in terms of the way it conforms to and departs from this model. It is in this sociological perspective that communication has been studied here. doi

Underlying each kind of social order we find a relevant set of social norms. These norms are ultimate social values, differing from other kinds of ultimate values in that they do not function as goals and objectives that are striven for but function, rather, as a guide for action and conduct, often establishing a kind of outer and inner limit to the range of activity that is permissible and desirable in the pursuance of a goal. Norms do not provide means and ends but criteria for making choices among them.

Norms are expressed in terms of rules regarding conduct and action. Norms, and the rules in which they are embodied, have a moral character; persons consider norms and rules to be desirable in their own right, to be binding in an obligatory way, and to be in some sense external to those who are guided by them. This does not mean, of course, that norms only function when they have been intracepted as ultimate values. There are many occasions when it is expedient for an unbelieving actor to acted in such a way as to give the appearance that he has acted in response to moral norms, or at least not to contradict openly the possibility that he has acted in this way.

Failure to obey the rules is sanctioned negatively The sanction may be specific, formally established in advance, and administered by officially authorized bodies. The sanction may be informal and administered by diffuse, indirect social disapproval. Sanctions reinforce self-regulation, and together these forces lead persons to behave in a way that is regular and can be anticipated and in a way that is considered legitimate and socially proper.

The occasions when persons in Dixon come together and engage in spoken communication may differ, one from another, in basic ways: comings-together may differ in number and identity of participants; in the kind of ties that bind those who participate; in the motive, the intent, and the function of the coming-together; in the social place and context in which the coming-together occurs; and in many other ways.

On occasions in which islanders engage in face-to-face spoken communication, the conduct and action of participants are guided and integrated together under the influence of many different social norms. Action is guided and integrated by the rights and obligations pertaining to kinfolk, property-holders, contractees, citizens, friends, guests, and the like, and by standards, such as efficiency, economy, and respect for tradition. In one situation the social orderliness that prevails will be largely determined by one set of norms; in another situation a different set of norms will provide the principal guides for action.

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

It is possible to consider any particular social order in a crudely functional way and say that it serves to ensure that a particular set of human needs or objectives will be fulfilled in an orderly, habitual, and cooperative manner. From this point of view, a preliminary distinction may be made among three elements: a particular set of needs or objectives; a set of practices, conventions, and arrangements through which these ends are fulfilled; and the particular set of norms which supports and bolsters these arrangements. The system of practices and arrangements considered in this study brings order not to economic life or political life but to communication.

In work situations where constant communication is requires among participants for the governance of work-flow, and where there is some barrier—social or physical—to ordinary communication, a special communication system commonly arises. An illustration may

be taken from Dixon dock work. During the loading and unloading of boats at the Dixon pier, the man operating the winch is often cut off, aurally or visually, or both, from the man in the best position to guide the cargo as it is lowered or raised in the batch or in the hold. To fulfill the winch operator's need for constant information as to the position of the cargo he is moving, a language of hand-signals is available for signaling above the noise and beyond the physical barriers of the operation. By means of this system of communication, any man in the work team can initiate an extended sequence of directional commands to the winch operator or retransmit commands to him from someone in the hold whom the man on the winch cannot see or hear. In order to reinforce this communication system in which any member of a crew can, at any moment, take over command of the crew, it is useful for all members of the crew, regardless of rank an the job or rank with respect to wider social statuses, to respect one another as persons whose independent judgment will be sound and as persons from whom it is possible to take commands. Work needs are fulfilled by a communication system, and the communication system is in turn buttressed by moral beliefs.

Another example may be cited. There are times of crisis for members of the Dixon community when it is imperative that any adult in the community be able to contact quickly any other member of the community. Accident or sudden sickness, rearrangements for an oncoming social, news of a job opening, last minute cancellations of cooperative fishing or crofting ventures—these are examples of such crises. The need to adapt to these extraordinary situations is fulfilled on the island by means of an emergency communication system.

In Dixon there were at the time of the study fourteen telephones, some located in public buildings such as the hotel and post-office, and others located in private houses, especially the houses of those persons, for example car-hirers or county officials, who needed a telephone for occupational reasons. Most of the hundred-odd households and regular places of work in the community were connected with each of the other houses or places of work by a known communication channel involving two telephones and two or more households or offices. In cases of emergency, it was understood that any adult who wished to speak to any other adult could walk to the nearest phone, contact the phone nearest the ultimate recipient, and have the individual who answered the phone relay the message to the ultimate recipient or call him to the phone. This communication system fulfilled the needs of crisis situations so that, from the point of view of emergencies, the community was saturated with telephones.

It will be apparent that the persistence of such a communication system depends on the presence and maintenance of good will.

Those who do have phones must be willing to extend favors to those who do not, and those who do not have phones must not abuse the courtesy of those who do. This good will is due partly to the presence of kinship ties that interconnect almost all the families, partly to the age-mate solidarity generated by a shared "school-hood," and partly to the fact that islanders know enough about one another to appreciate a crisis from the point of view of the persons involved in it. And reinforcing these norms of mutual aid is the sensitivity of most islanders to the widespread disapproval that would be accorded them if they refused communication courtesies or unduly exploited the willingness of others to extend them.

Again, then, we see that particular needs are adapted to by means of a communication system and that this system in turn is stabilized and buttressed by means of social norms which underlie it.

When we take as our unit of study not a particular work situation with its particular communication requirements, nor crisis situations, but the daily social life of an entire community, then the connection between needs, communication system, and moral norms becomes less easy to be sure about but perhaps more interesting and significant.

In Dixon, as presumably in any community, there is a need for information to be able to flow through an almost infinite number of channels and networks, for lines of communication to be formed, altered, and re-formed in a fluid and constantly changing pattern. This flow of information is a condition of any social process—cooperation, conflict, accommodation, and even avoidance. In the criss-crossing of social adjustments in an isolated community, and in the multiple entanglements of its relatively self-sufficient division of labor, it is important that *any* two individuals—at least any two social adults—be able to form a link in a communication chain should the need for it arise. And it is important that any occasion of spoken communication terminate in such a way that all participants feel that should a need arise any one of them will be in a position to enter again into spoken communication with any other of the participants.

The communication needs of everyday life in Dixon, in the multitude of situations where no special communication problem is found, are satisfied by a communication system of rules, practices, and arrangements giving rise to a unit of communication activity that is here called interplay. As described in Part Four of the study, we find that rules are observed as to who may enter into conversation with whom, upon what topics and with what pretext, and for what length of time. A set of significant gestures is employed as a means of initiating and terminating a spate of communication and as a means for those who are to participate to accredit each other as legitimate par-

ticipants. A single focus of thought and of visual attention tends to be maintained, and the concerted visual attention of the participants tends to be transferred smoothly from one participant who is speaking to another who wishes to speak next, the transfer being effected by expressive cues or "clearance signs." By appropriate gestures, recipients convey to the sender the fact that they are according him their attention. Interruptions and lulls are regulated so as not to disrupt the flow of messages. Messages that are not part of the officially accredited flow are modulated so as to interfere only in a limited way with the accredited messages. Nearby persons who are not accredited participants visibly desist in some way from exploiting their communication position and modulate their own communication, if any, so as not to provide difficult interference. A "working acceptance" is maintained, through which participants who may be in real disagreement with one another give temporary lip-service to actions and judgments that bring them into agreement. There is a tendency for complex judgments to be made concerning each participant's social attributes, and for these judgments to determine the relative average length and the relative frequency of each participant's messages. Finally, each spate of communication during which a given set of participants is accredited and a single moving focus of attention is maintained tends to be arranged into a sequence of discrete, relatively self-sufficient interchanges, and each of these interchanges or communication spurts contains one or more rounds of statement and reply.

The system of rules and conventions which guides the flow of messages during spoken communication is a normative system. Not only can it be anticipated that islanders will adhere to these communication conventions but also that they are, in some sense, morally obliged to do so. When one of these conventions is broken, it is not the state or the community that is offended, but only the other participants, and in most cases they are obliged to sanction the offender in an inexplicit roundabout way. Thus, conventions for guiding spoken communication on the island constitute the kind of normative system which is sometimes called etiquette.

The communication etiquette which brings order to the flow of messages during spoken interaction constitutes a practical communication system for the varied interactions of everyday life on the island. Underlying this etiquette there is a set of social norms which apparently gives communication conventions stability, strength, and flexibility. For summary purposes, these norms can be roughly placed into two broad groupings. There are norms obliging persons to inhibit their immediate response to a situation and to convey a calculated one; and there are norms which oblige the individual to

act in just the opposite way, to express himself spontaneously, candidly, and without consideration of the likely response of others to him. These two sets of norms were found to be operative wherever, whenever, and with whomsoever spoken communication occurred on the island.

Of the norm which lead islanders to inhibit their immediate response during interaction, three central ones may be cited. First, the individual is obliged to suppress his "real" feelings about those to whom he is talking and act in such a way as to show constant regard for their positively-defined attributes and at the same time constantly avoid a show of concern for their negatively-valued attributes. In other words, considerateness and respect must be constantly shown for others present. Secondly, the participant is obliged to hold himself sufficiently off from all kinds of ties, constraints, and involvements for the duration of the interaction so that he will be free, at least to a degree, to sustain the role of communicator, to follow the course of the interaction wherever it may lead. Typically the participant will withdraw himself from involvements which occurred prior to the interaction and from those which are scheduled to occur after the interaction has terminated, lest these external involvements strain, impoverish, or trivialize the self that he makes available for the interaction. He attempts to refrain from uncontrolled emotional responses to a passing object of attention, so as not to jeopardize the continued poise and readiness he exerts as an interactant. And he attempts to exercise restraint in his demands for attention, praise, and other indulgences, showing that his capacity as communicator has not been overpowered by other orientations. Thirdly, the individual is obliged to conduct himself so that the impression he initially gives of himself, and which others use in building up a framework of response to him, will not be discredited later in the interaction by gaffes, boners, disclosures, and the like, nor seem to others to be pretentious. These three inhibitory norms, considerateness, self-control, and projective circumspection, seemingly modify and guide the way in which an islander performs every one of his acts while he is a participant in spoken interaction.

Opposing these inhibitory norms, there is a set of norms obliging islanders to become immediately and thinkingly involved in any interaction in which they have been accredited as participants. A participant must not seem to be indifferent to the interaction or disdainful of it. He is expected to become sufficiently involved in the proceedings at hand to be unselfconscious about his role in the interaction, and it is expected that he will desist from worrying about the impression he is making so that he can give his main attention to the subject matter of the communication. He is obliged to be sufficiently

honest and candid in a linguistic way, and sincere and unaffected in an expressive way, to give his co-participants confidence in the validity of the information they are receiving from him. And he is expected to give at least some expression to his real feelings, regardless of the price he may have to pay for so doing.

At all times and in all places islanders tended to manifest a fundamental action-tendency relative to communication. Whenever an individual could be associated with an act or event, there was a tendency for others to take this happening as an expression of the characteristics of the individual (whether or not they were justified in doing so), especially as an expression of the conceptions he had of himself and of others. Further, there was a tendency for individuals to show deep concern for the judgments and evaluations made of them, whether these judgments were conveyed linguistically or expressively, and whether they carried any immediate instrumental consequences or not. Finally, islanders in all their actions tended to take into consideration the "meaning" or interpretation the others would be likely to place upon these actions (whether in fact the others did or did not do so) and guide their actions accordingly. In brief, islanders found that they must act under what might be called conditions of great expressive responsibility.

It is a crucial characteristic of face-to-face communication that a host of acts and events inevitably becomes available for aptly expressing the conceptions participants have of one another. In order to exert expressive responsibility, islanders must exert thorough and continued care of their behavior while in the immediate presence of others. It is in terms of this action-tendency and the unique communication conditions of face-to-face communication that we can understand how communication norms are related and articulated to the set of conventions which guides the flow of messages. The rules that messages ought not to be interrupted, or that a participant ought not to withdraw from an interaction before the others are prepared for this, or that a speaker ought to be given attention, etc., function to ensure that orderly communication will prevail, but the manner in which these general rules are to be applied to a particular case and often the motive for applying the rules seem to rest on the fact that interruptions, leave-takings, inattentions, and the like are aptly designed—apart from their role in the ordering of messages—as signs for expressing the judgments that participants make of one another. Islanders tended to decide how to conduct themselves in the presence of others by considering the interpretation that others would be likely to place upon this action, but in guiding action on this basis, islanders found themselves acting so that messages could flow in an orderly fashion.

It has been suggested that the Dixon community has certain general communication needs, and that these needs are satisfied through a set of conventions and practices giving rise to what has been called interplay. Reinforcing this system of communication we find norms pertaining to communication: norms requiring individuals to inhibit their immediate response to the situation and at the same time to involve themselves spontaneously in the interplay, and norms requiring the individual to act with expressive responsibility. There is perhaps a kind of functional relationship linking the needs, the communication system, and the norms. We may start with a norm and see how it facilitates the maintenance of the communication system, and how the system in turn facilitates the fulfillment of the needs; or we may start at the other end of the chain, with the needs, and see how they would tend to give rise to the communication system, and how in turn the communication system tends to facilitate the development of interaction norms. For example, if information is to be conveyed from one individual to another (this being a general need or requirement for community life), then it is useful to have a set of communication conventions which lead a prospective recipient to enter communication when called into it, to give uninterrupted and uninteresting attention to the message until it is terminated, and to signal back to the sender that the message has been correctly received. In turn, the recipient follows these conventions because he feels that the sender will interpret any failure to do so as an expression of disrespect, for the interruption of another's message or a failure to accord him visual attention is, aside from its role in a communication system, a vehicle aptly designed for conveying an expression of disrespect. (Thus one can see that respect for the other has its function as a guide for face-to-face communication, and hence need not be exerted, and relatively speaking is not exerted, for those who are not present.) Or, starting from the other end of the chain, we can say, for example, that an individual feels obliged to show himself in control of his desires and his involvement, and that, given a tendency for every act to be examined for expressive significance, he will be required to show that he is content with the attention quota accorded him and that he is net unduly embroiled in events that have occurred before the interplay or not too much at the mercy of events that are to occur after its termination. By acting in such a way as to express continuously the fact that he is in control of himself, the individual places himself in a position to initiate interplay and to continue as an effective participant in it. And by being in a position to continue as a participant wherever the communication may lead, the individual ensures that he will not constitute, on any occasion, a block to the free flow of information in the community. Similarly, the minimum of respect that all islanders

show to one another means that all islanders will feel obliged, under proper circumstances, to treat any other islander as a co-participant in communication, and the relative degree of respect that any particular islander has for any other particular islander has the effect of determining the allocation of attention quota, hence providing a guide for the flow of messages. And, too, while the obligation islanders feel to pay ritual homage to each other by expressive gestures of respect requires that each make himself available to the other for communication, the obligation to exert self-control and not convey an unfavorable judgment of the other requires that no individual take undue advantage of this availability of the other.

## Interaction Euphoria and Dysphoria

On some occasions when islanders engage in spoken communication, all participants tend to feel at ease, unselfconscious, and unembarrassed. Interactional euphoria prevails. No one senses a false note. The way in which one participant is involved in the interaction does not disrupt a proper degree of spontaneous involvement on the part of others. At such times a balance seems to be achieved between action which is guided by the inhibitory norms and action which is guided by the expressive ones. On such occasions respect for others and self-control seem to be so deeply intracepted or so well feigned that the individual can act in a relatively spontaneous way and yet not cause offense to others.

On other occasions when islanders engage in spoken communication, one or more participants may feel out of countenance, flustered, out of place, or offended. Some interactional dysphoria prevails. At such times an imbalance is found in the opposing norms of communication.

In order to avoid dysphoric situations, or counteract those which have not been successfully avoided, participants regularly employ strategies, that is, rational adaptations to the normative requirements of interaction. For example, ruses are employed by an individual in order to secure a degree of approval from others that would cause offense to them if openly sought after. So, too, strategies such as discretion, hedging, unseriousness, feigned indifference, non-observance, etc., are employed in order to guard against committing offenses oneself and in order to make it easier for others not to commit an offense.

The occurrence of interaction tensions and disharmonies is extremely common on the island. In response to this fact, one general strategy seems always and everywhere to be employed. The requirement that participants exert self-control and respect for others is

allowed to establish a working acceptance through which official linguistic lip-service is given to the fiction that all present are behaving properly, that all are in agreement on matters of significance, and that all respect one another. And underneath this surface of agreement, the vast expressive equipment that becomes available when persons are in each other's presence is used to convey a contrary view, a view that would disrupt the working acceptance were it conveyed openly and officially. This undercurrent of communication, now taking the form of furtive coalitions, now taking the form of innuendo, hints, and oblique thrusts, provides the forbearant actor with a safe channel of free expression. Apparently this two way-pull on communication assures that persons with different views and even personal dislikes of one another will yet be able to tolerate once another long enough for information to flow back and forth between them.

## The Special Characteristics of the Interaction Order

The social order that obtains when persons are engaged in spoken communication—by virtue of being so engaged—possesses some characteristics that are perhaps less pronounced in other types of social order.

First, interactional improprieties are typically sanctioned in an indirect and inexplicit way. When an individual commits an interaction offense, he still remains someone for whom respect must be shown; interactionally speaking, to sanction him openly is only to make matters worse. The punishment itself would be a crime. Thus we find many interactions in which one or more participants are required to exercise forbearance and to tolerate a sense that things are not going right or that improprieties have been committed. Strategies and unofficial communications must be employed as a means of responding to offenses in an inoffensive way. Only the young who are not yet social persons can be openly sanctioned for an interaction offense. The young have no social face to lose, hence they can be openly criticized without producing the embarrassing scene of someone losing face.

Secondly, there are many requirements of behavior which the actor in a certain sense is not made morally responsible for. Thus a person who disrupts euphoria by bragging may be indirectly sanctioned, but a person who disrupts it because he has a tic or is cross-eyed is usually merely avoided if possible, there being little desire on the part of the avoiders for the avoidance to be taken as a sanction. We desire persons to be unselfconscious and not to become flustered easily, but a certain kind of guiltlessness attaches to those who offend in this way.

Finally, there is the paradoxical fact, less true, perhaps, of other kinds of social order, that interactants are required to behave in a way that is at once confirmative to an obligatory pattern and at the same time spontaneous and unthinking. Here a voluntaristic scheme of analysis in which unthinking response is a residual category seems somewhat unsuitable. We must attempt to account for the uniformity of interactive and expressive behavior, and its obligatory nature, by suggesting that at some stage in the interactant's life proper affective conduct was formally or informally impressed upon him; and we must attempt to account for its spontaneous nature, and the requirement that it be spontaneous, by suggesting that at the moment of interaction the participant is so well and so deeply trained in the expressive patterns of his group that he can conduct himself properly without thought.

## Suggestions for Research

Experience in the field suggests that rules regarding communication conduct are so automatically taken for granted, both by those who are studied and by those who do the study, that it is convenient to depend on extraordinary events to open our eyes to what ordinarily occurs. In situations where ordinary spoken communication cannot prevail, extraordinary arrangements with high visibility to the student are required. On this assumption, then, some lines of further research in spoken communication can be suggested.

First, classroom behavior seems a useful area for study because in a classroom children can be observed who have not yet learned to keep themselves in control or respect others and yet are sensitive to the fact that they ought to conduct themselves in a mannerly way. In addition, a classroom provides an excellent opportunity for an observer to sit amidst interaction and take notes. Secondly, there are natural field situations in which spoken communication regularly occurs and regularly presents an interaction problem. In these situations a fundamental requirement of interplay—a requirement that may be met with ease and success in other situations—is not fulfilled or not easily fulfilled; participants must give special attention to it and in so doing often make it easier for the student to observe the significance of it. Thus the requirement that participants act in a spontaneous way is difficult to study in intimate family interaction, because uncalculated involvement is apparently easy to maintain; in staged interaction, as in that which occurs during television shows, spontaneous involvement must be convincingly feigned under difficult circumstances, providing a fruitful context in which to study the role of spontaneity. So, too, the role of tact and emotional control,

by which participants conceal or overlook facts which might disrupt euphoria, might be profitably studied in situations such as court hearings, where persons are either not allowed to act tactfully or feel obliged not to do so, for here the consequences of failure to exert tact would be readily perceptible. Thirdly, it would be fruitful to study types of interaction which were similar to spoken interaction in some sense, but which provide very restricted examples of interplay. Examples are found in the conversation-like interaction that occurs in the moves and counter-moves of card and board games, fencing, wrestling, and the like. These interplay-like activities provide simplified model-like versions of spoken communication, the rules and conventions of the activity highly restricting the type of messages and the type of conduct that is allowed. Another fruitful context for study is to be found in work situations which require a constant exchange of communication for the guidance of work and yet which for some reason make it difficult to employ spoken communication. Examples are found in the stock market, in cargo-loading depots, on railroads, etc. In these contexts, too, a simplified kind of interplay occurs, study of which might throw light on more complicated speech systems. In all these contexts it would be relatively easy to study the relationships among communication needs, communication systems, and communication norms.

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sociology/communication

Canadian-born Erving Goffman (1922–1982) was the twentieth century's most important sociologist writing in English. His 1953 dissertation is published here for the first time, on the hundredth anniversary of his birth. The remarkable study, based on fieldwork on a remote Scottish island, presents in embryonic form the full spread of Goffman's thought. Framed as a "report on a study of conversational interaction," the dissertation lingers on the modest talk of island "crofters." It is trademark Goffman: ambitious, unconventional in form, and brimmed with big-picture insight. The thesis is that social order is made and re-made in communication—the "interaction order" he re-visited in a famous and final talk before his 1982 death. The dissertation is, as Yves Winkin writes in a new introduction, the "Rosetta stone for his entire work." It was here, in 360 dense pages, that Goffman revealed, quietly, his peerless sensitivity to the invisible wireframes of everyday life.

Canadian-born *Erving Goffman* (1922–1982) was among the most important sociologists of the twentieth century. *Yves Winkin* is Distinguished Emeritus Professor at the University of Liège and Honorary Professor at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers.

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