ERVING GOFFMAN AND YOU

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ABSTRACT

Erving Goffman and You is an animated web series that explores the main tenets of sociologist Erving Goffman’s The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Goffman is best known for using theatrical terminology to analyze mundane interactions. Goffman explained his theories with anecdotal examples, but his anecdotes are not as relatable as they were when the book was published. Erving Goffman and You reboots Goffman’s concepts through six modern day examples. The web series relies on a knowledge base that includes both Goffman’s work and the work of Goffmanian scholars. The combination of updated examples and visually engaging content provides a fresh take on dramaturgical analysis for newcomers and fans of Goffman alike.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Erving Goffman may have defined dramaturgical analysis for the twentieth century with his seminal work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, but while his concepts remain relevant, his 1950’s examples are no longer relatable. *Erving Goffman and You* is a 21st century reboot of Goffman’s work that illustrates his concepts through modern examples and an animated format. This is not the first attempt to explore the interplay between Goffman’s theories and modern, often digital life. Goffmanian scholars have been analyzing a wide variety of modern day interactions using Goffman’s concepts. Some have analyzed cell phone use, for example, and others have extended Goffmanian terms to virtual interactions. *Erving Goffman and You* uses these studies as its knowledge base, but also presents six completely new modern day anecdotes with analysis.

The anecdotes cover the Goffmanian concepts of impression management, tactful inattention, unmeant gestures, regions, and teams. Each concept is explained through an example of a commonplace, 21st century interaction. This method of explanation mimics Goffman’s anecdotal method in his book, and it adds modern elements to each concept similar to articles written by Goffmanian scholars. *Erving Goffman and You* is a visually dynamic blueprint designed for those who are unfamiliar with Goffman’s work. Each episode is a few minutes long, and the content is presented through a combination of live action and animation. This animation style, a unique hybrid of photo-realism and simple cartoons, enables viewers to objectively analyze each interaction from the perspective of a sociologist rather than that of the characters.
2. THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE

*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was published in 1959 and is considered Erving Goffman’s first major work. The book explores underlying sociological structures behind seemingly mundane interactions. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* contains numerous anecdotes and observations. This includes Goffman’s ethnographic observations in the Shetland Isles, literary works, and various articles regarding social etiquette. Those who are reading *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* for the first time may not find anecdotes revolving around a 1950s housewife to be relatable. Consequently, Goffman’s work could rapidly become dry and outdated as time passes.

### 2.1 DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

Goffman wrote *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* under the assumption that we are all information-seeking beings. When we encounter another person we are looking for clues to tell us more about this person. We are assessing both what Goffman calls the “given performance” and any cues that are “given off”. The given performance is what someone intentionally displays to those around her or him. Gestures and other small indicators can constitute what is given off (Goffman 2). Goffman posited that people attempt to control their performances

*...by influencing the definition of the situation which the others come to formulate, and he can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan* (Goffman 3-4).
Controlling a performance involves intentionally saying or doing things that will affect the way
other people view the person giving the performance.

Dramaturgical analysis encompasses the idea that theatrical terminology can be used in
sociological studies of everyday interaction. The term “performance” is one of the theatrical
metaphors that Goffman uses in order to analyze everyday interaction. Other participants in the
interaction are sometimes called “audience members”. “The issues dealt with by stagecraft and
stage management”, Goffman explains, “...seem to occur everywhere in social life, providing a
clear-cut dimension for formal sociological analysis” (Goffman 15).

Goffman did not want readers to think that dramaturgical analysis translates to “all the
world’s a stage”. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is not a book about finding theatrical
moments in our daily lives. In his conclusion, Goffman states, “This report is not concerned with
aspects of theater that creep into everyday life. It is concerned with the structure of social
encounters - the structure of those entities in social life that come into being whenever persons
enter one another’s immediate physical presence” (Goffman 254). Goffman was not looking for
theatricality when he observed interactions; he was trying to uncover a sociological framework
that seemed to guide these interactions. Theatrical terminology is useful for describing these
interactions.

2.2 IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

We use different techniques in order to manage our given and given off performances. A
simple example of these techniques is social mobility. Someone may give a performance that is
above or below her or his social standing depending on what impression she or he would like to
give her or his audience. A performance that is contrary to a person’s actual living situation is called an idealized performance (Goffman 34-36).

The examples that Goffman uses to explain idealized performances include social mobility in early-20th century Scotland, Americans in the Depression Era, and inhabitants of the Shetland Isles in the 1950s (Goffman 36-39). The wide range of anecdotal evidence adds a global dimension to Goffman’s theories. However, all of these examples are somewhat dated. The Great Depression, for example, was a relatively recent event for readers in 1959.

Occasionally, mistakes can occur in a performance. “The crucial point,” Goffman explains, “is not that the fleeting definition of the situation caused by an unmeant gesture is itself so blameworthy but rather merely that it is different from the definition officially projected” (Goffman 52). If someone is not managing her or his idealized performance carefully then she or he might accidentally make an unmeant gesture. This will result in a different impression of this person than what she or he intended. Goffman uses examples of situations in which maintaining a certain performance is an extremely delicate process. His anecdotes include Chinese customs of showing deference to one’s parents (Goffman 53), music being played in “British Court” (Goffman 54), and Simone de Beauvoir’s writings on women’s outfits (Goffman 57-58). The smallest gesture — such as a cough at the wrong moment, or a slip that is not concealed by a skirt — can completely destroy someone’s performance. Goffman used a wide range of examples to describe this delicate balance that occurs during performances. He wanted to emphasize that impression management can be interrupted in any kind of situation — whether it is a special occasion or a banal, everyday occurrence (Goffman 54-55).
2.3 Tact

Goffman also wrote about the techniques we use when impression management is disrupted. These “protective measures” (Goffman 212) are usually taken when someone has created a “scene” or “unmeant gesture”. Goffman defines this behavior as: “an individual acts in such a way as to destroy or seriously threaten the polite appearance of consensus” (Goffman 210). If such a mistake were to occur in public where the audience is comprised of strangers, then the performance’s disruption may be overlooked. Goffman wrote, “We often find that when interaction must proceed in the presence of outsiders, outsiders tactfully act in an uninterested, uninvolved, unperceiving fashion, so that if physical isolation is not obtained by walls or distance, effective isolation can at least be obtained by convention” (Goffman 230). This particular technique is called “tactful inattention”.

Goffman’s examples of tactful inattention in Anglo-American societies include ignoring neighboring table conversations in a restaurant (Goffman 230). He then contrasts tactful inattention in Anglo-American societies with life in the Shetland Isles, where “casual mutual aid” (Goffman 230) during a disrupted performance is commonplace. Tactful inattention seems to vary across cultures in terms of the amount of privacy afforded to the performers, but the need for tact as a protective measure seems to be commonplace in most situations.

2.4 Regions

Goffman wrote about spaces where performances are given and where performances are contradicted. These spaces are called “regions” (Goffman 106). The “front region” is where a performance takes place. Goffman uses the words “politeness” and “decorum” to describe the behavior that is usually associated with a front region performance (Goffman 107). The “back
region” or “backstage” area is “...where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted”. Goffman describes backstage areas as places where performers “can relax” and prepare their performances. The back region is also a space for privacy. Goffman wrote that telephones, for example, are kept in back regions because telephone conversations are often personal (Goffman 112). Nowadays, however, the use of telephones is no longer restricted to a private space.

Etiquette books from the 1950s were another source of material for Goffman. Most domestic servants had been replaced with automatic technologies like washing machines and vacuums. Wives were expected to fill the roles of hostess, maid, cook, and cleaner. They subsequently had to move between front and back regions quite frequently. “Etiquette books,” Goffman wrote, “provide helpful directions for facilitating such changes, suggesting that if the hostess must withdraw to a back region for an extended period of time, as when making up the beds, then it will protect appearances if the host takes the guest for a little walk in the garden” (Goffman 123). Modern day readers may find these references to be outdated.

Similarly, some of Goffman’s other anecdotes about regions have not aged well. Goffman wrote about African American employees being placed in the back of a factory (Goffman 124), and described an executive as being able to “take his jacket off, loosen his tie...” (Goffman 126) in the backstage. There has been some progress in the workplace regarding race and gender since Goffman wrote The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Although it is familiar to readers, Goffman’s example is not entirely accurate in its representation of the American workplace.
2.5 Teams

We don’t always interact one-on-one. If a group of people are involved in the same given performance then they constitute a team. Goffman defines a team as “any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine” (Goffman 79). Teammates are primarily related through this performance or routine; they do not have to be blood relations or friends.

Goffman provides readers with a number of examples and anecdotes about teams. These include civil servants who never outwardly oppose their Ministers (Goffman 86), Chinese merchants who set prices according to a customer’s appearance (Goffman 88), and a literary excerpt from Franz Kafka’s The Trial (Goffman 95). He also cites military warfare during World War I, in which “experienced working-class sergeants managed the delicate task of covertly teaching their new lieutenants to take a dramatically expressive role at the head of the platoon and to die quickly in a prominent dramatic position, as befits public-school men” (Goffman 102). Once again, many of Goffman’s examples are varied but may seem historic rather than relatable.

Goffman concludes his chapter on teams with an analogy that likens teams to secret societies. The team’s secret is based on their performance. Anyone who has performed as a team, Goffman wrote, “…must all carry within ourselves something of the sweet guilt of conspirators” (Goffman 105). The term “conspirators” seems to indicate that a team protects their collaboration similar to a group of criminals pulling off a heist.

2.6 Expanding on Goffman

The most consistent criticism of Goffman’s works seems to be that he did not attempt to expand his work into other disciplines. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have found that
Goffman’s writing can be applied to their fields of study. George Psathas summarizes three varying perspectives on Goffman’s work in “Theoretical Perspectives on Goffman”.

The first perspective Psathas discusses is “interactional citizenship”. According to an article by Colomy and Brown (Colomy and Brown, “Goffman and Interactional Citizenship”), Goffman neglected the study of social change in his writing (Psathas 384). Colomy and Brown believe that Goffman’s concepts should be used to study the differences amongst race, gender, ethnicity, etc. (Psathas 385) Psathas then summarizes Candace West’s argument about feminism (West, “Goffman in Feminist Perspective”). West believes that Goffman’s “analyses of sex and gender, situation, and social order are of considerable relevance” (Psathas 387). West and her fellow feminist studies scholars have re-appropriated Goffman’s concepts into their theoretical framework. Finally, Psathas wrote about James Ostrow’s article (Ostrow, “Spontaneous Involvement and Social Life”) in which the author applies a phenomenologist perspective to Goffman’s work (Psathas 389). According to Psathas, “Goffman remained uninterested in connecting his own theorizings [sic] with those of others” (Psathas 391). However, another argument could be made that Goffman could not have possibly included all of the different ways his works could be applied in one book.

In other words, Psathas seems to highlight the adaptability of Goffman’s work rather than pointing out what Goffman missed. The authors of these works are interacting with Goffman’s texts and extending it into their fields of interest. Their criticisms of Goffman’s work are important because they emphasize how far Goffmanian concepts can be stretched. His work has influenced the study of law (Yoshino, Covering, 2006), linguistic studies (Tannen, That’s Not What I Meant!, 1986), and computer science (Ackerman and Halverson, “Sharing Expertise: The
Next Step for Knowledge Management”, 2003), among others. Those who continue to study sociology seem to be relying on the longitude of Goffman’s works. Instead of extending Goffman’s works to a different discipline, these scholars are extending Goffman into the 21st century.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goffman wrote The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life as an analysis of face-to-face interactions. He disregarded any interactions that were mediated (phone calls, letters, etc.). It was easier for him to exclude such interactions in the 1950s, but modern day interactions involve a large amount of mediated performances. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on scholars who have analyzed cell phone interactions and internet interactions through the lens of dramaturgy.

3.1 CELL PHONE INTERACTION

Modern everyday life seems to involve many more electronic devices than when Goffman wrote The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Karin Knorr Cetina calls these types of interactions “synthetic situations”. Cetina’s Distinguished Lecture at a meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction presents her research on how to “rethink” Goffman’s concepts (Cetina 61-62). A synthetic situation is one in which we are interacting with other people without being in their presence. We are using “fully or partially scoped components” — such as cell phones — in order to communicate (Cetina 69). These “components” have significantly altered the study of interaction. She argued that face-to-face interactions are not as complicated as synthetic situations. Synthetic situations have more “properties” than face-to-face interactions because “the situation is not ‘naked’ — it is scopically articulated and augmented” (Cetina 69).
There are sometimes buttons, screens, cameras, and other technical hardware involved in these situations.

The concept of a “synthetic situation” covers a wide range of interactions. Cell phone use in particular seems exemplary of synthetic situations. It seems acceptable to answer a private phone call in public, or to interrupt a face-to-face conversation in order to answer a cell phone call. In other words, backstage conversations are occurring more frequently in the front stage.

Ruth Rettie wrote in “Mobile Phone Communication: Extending Goffman” that cell phones provide both synchronous and asynchronous communication. “In synchronous media,” Rettie explains, “...the interactants can work together in common time”. Asynchronous communication, on the other hand, “is not situated in a common present and...there is no ongoing collaboration in real-time”. A phone call can be considered synchronous communication and text messages can be considered asynchronous (Rettie 426).

Rettie argues that the presence of mobile phones can significantly alter Goffman’s concept of a “gathering”, or people who share a situation (Rettie 427). Rettie conducted interviews with 32 adults in the United Kingdom and asked them to keep 24-hour diaries about their cell phone interactions (Rettie 428). Most of her respondents seemed to equate phone calls with face-to-face interactions (Rettie 430). They also “felt that it was acceptable to use their phones when in public...but not when engaged with other people in focused interaction” (Rettie 432). Like Goffman, Rettie presented her findings through quotes and brief stories about her respondents’ experiences.

Rettie relied solely on text to present her findings, but Lee Humphreys used quite a few images in “Cellphones in public: social interactions in a wireless era”. Her research involved
observational fieldwork and interviews (Humphreys 812). She focused her study on what Rettie termed “invasive calls”, which are situations that combine cell phone use and face-to-face interactions (Rettie 432).

There were a number of situations in which a person who was “With” someone else in an interaction suddenly found themselves as “Single” as soon as the other person picked up a cell phone. “If the person did answer the cellphone and engage in a new exclusive interaction, the former With often exhibited some anxiety or annoyance at becoming a ‘Single’” (Humphreys 815). It seems to be acceptable behavior, but it causes the person who is left out of the cell phone conversation to feel uneasy or “awkward” (Humphreys 815-816).

Humphreys displays a few photos of situations in which two or more people’s interactions were disrupted by a phone call (Humphreys 815-820). The photos seem candid and are in grayscale with black bars over the subjects’ eyes. Readers are only privy to one moment of these situations instead of being able to view an entire interaction. Furthermore, Humphreys felt it necessary to include two photos of a situation in which a woman leaves a café table after her companion begins talking on a cell phone (see figure 1). Readers must imagine what happens before, between, and after the two photographs as they might do when reading a succession of comic strip panels (McCloud 63). Humphreys presented her research through a static medium. She described her findings using text and consecutive images. An audio-visual medium might be better suited for presenting a situation that takes place over time.
figure 1. Figures 3 and 4 are displayed to show two moments of an interaction; “Cellphones in public: social interactions in a wireless era”; Humphreys
The physical presence of a cell phone has become a part of the performance of self. In a study on how mobile phones are presented to the public, researchers found that many college students viewed cell phones as “a symbol of individuality” (Katz and Sugiyama 74). They have integrated an object that was sequestered in backstage areas in 1950s into their front stage performances. The visible presence of a cell phone and its many attributes contributes to other people’s impressions of the cell phone owner.

Leopoldina Fortunati analyzed cell phone communication in terms of front stage performances. “The mobile telephone,” Fortunati explains, “allows the non-celebrity to stage their life for bystanders in public spaces. In this way ‘every person’ can underscore their existence by playing out their back-stage lives in front of a small audience” (Fortunati 206). Although bystanders are not direct participants in a conversation, they can still be considered an audience for at least one side of the conversation.

Fortunati’s research included interviews and observation in Italy (Fortunati 207). Her results are displayed through short quotes. She described a transformation that has taken place since Goffman wrote *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*: “The obligation not to disturb others with noise has seemingly been transformed into the right to talk with a person who is absent, without previous assent from those present” (Fortunati 216). In other words, mobile phones seem to have blurred the strict spatial and behavioral lines between front stage and backstage (Fortunati 217). We can use our backstage conversations to construct performances, but cell phones can also disrupt our performances.

In a similar study of public transport in the Philippines, Fernando Paragas found that “...even when someone tilts the precarious balance between private and public spaces by talking
a tad too loudly on their mobiles, rarely do people speak their minds” (Paragas 121). This is the result of a backstage performance clashing with front stage decorum. Although bystanders become an audience for backstage conversations, front stage etiquette dictates that they should ignore this disruption. “Conversations,” Paragas writes, “either real or mobile, are generally accepted since passengers recognize that they have private, if only transient, territories within the public sphere” (Paragas 126). Each passenger seems to have her or his own bubble in which she or he may carry on cell phone conversations. Paragas includes one graph with the article displaying the framework for mobile telephony and public transport. It is displayed at the beginning of the article, and Paragas references it only once (see figure 2). Furthermore, Paragas does not seem to explain the chart to readers.

### 3.2 Dramaturgy on the Internet

Some scholars have focused mainly on text-based internet communication. Oren Soffer wrote in “Liquid Language?” that a typographic front region filters out ‘real world’ identities, and might allow, for example, the performance of false age or gender” (Soffer 1105). Internet users are able to perform roles that they might not be able to in the real world. However, many people find performing in written text to be difficult and less nuanced than face-to-face interactions (Soffer 1105). Soffer adds that written words can be “documented and saved, re-read, and even printed”, whereas spoken words usually fade out of our memories over time (Soffer 1105).

There have been a number of studies related to region management on the internet. As Soffer noted, the work that goes into maintaining a performance is different in virtual spaces.
paragas’ chart lays out his main ideas about the use of cell phones on public transportation in the philippines; “being mobile with the mobile: cellular telephony and renegotiations of public transport as public sphere”; paragas
Performing as one’s “self” on a social networking website, for example, seems to involve complicated management techniques.

In “All the World Wide Web’s A Stage”, Erika Pearson wrote about social networking services and navigation between front stage and backstage areas. She sums up the confluence between these two concepts as: “what feels like an intimate space can be under the watchful electronic gaze of a large unknown audience; what is being acted out as a front-stage performance could have no witnesses” (Pearson 2). Regions seem interchangeable depending on the number and identity of audience members. Pearson explains this concept through a “glass bedroom metaphor”. “The glass bedroom itself is not an entirely private space,” Pearson wrote, “nor a true backstage space as Goffman articulated, though it takes on elements of both over the course of its use” (Pearson 3). This metaphor is explained through text rather than shown to readers as visual content. Pearson then used an anecdotal example from recent political events. During the Eliot Spitzer scandal in New York, a reporter found Spitzer’s prostitute’s MySpace profile and publicized her contact information (Pearson 4). It seems as though the reporter found this woman’s back stage area, but her MySpace profile was a public front stage performance that everyone had access to.

Micro-blogging services like Twitter might require an extension of more generalized Goffmanian terms. Dhiraj Murthy wrote an article called “Towards a Sociological Understanding of Social Media”, but it does not include anecdotal examples like in Pearson’s article. Instead, Murthy uses Twitter’s functions as examples. In order to apply the concept of ritualization — Goffman’s theory that we develop gestural conventions over the course of our lifetime — Murthy writes about language conventions on Twitter. “Though the gestural conventions may be
mediated through graphical avatars, emoticons, or even unintended typed characters,” Murthy wrote, “these can be considered ‘gestures’ and they are laden with meaning” (Murthy 1067). Murthy does not give specific examples of these gestures, nor does he provide readers with any visual content. He could have explored, for example, the use of hashtags as a gestural convention.

Lori Kendall’s article, “‘Shout Into the Wind, and It Shouts Back’ Identity and interactional tensions on LiveJournal”, uses more specific examples to support her analysis. She researched impression management on LiveJournal, which was a popular blogging website in the early 00’s. Kendall conducted two years of participant observation and interviewed 26 LiveJournal users. She noticed tensions between LiveJournal as a private diary and LiveJournal as a public performance. The mixture of regions on the internet seems to involve a significant amount of management and control over who can view what content.

The users that Kendall interviewed made use of the interaction tools available to them. LiveJournal possesses a feature called “filters”. Users can publicize their posts for different sets of friends, or keep posts private. Kendall’s interviewees “were conscious of their use of the filtering feature of LiveJournal to manage their appearance to different elements of their blended audiences. For instance, many were careful to keep their personal and work lives separate” (Kendall 6). Specific examples such as filtering helped to illuminate impression management strategies such as audience segregation. However, visual content that shows how these tools look and function might have been a useful addition to the paper.

Filtering was not always an option for people who broadcasted information about themselves on personal webpages. Sharon Y.M. Chan wrote in “Wired_Selves: From Artifact to
Performance” that webpage owners were forced to omit facts in case audiences overlapped. Chan conducted her research under the assumption that the webpage was someone’s front stage performance and the offline self was the person’s backstage performance (Chan 274). One informant, Millie, felt the need to conceal the fact that she had a boyfriend on her webpage because her parents would disapprove (Chan 276). She did not have access to the impression management tools like LiveJournal users did in Kendall’s piece.

Scholars have also found that some internet interactions are directly influenced by performance techniques. Michael Hardey wrote an article called “Life beyond the screen: embodiment and identity through the internet”, in which he analyzed interactions on dating websites. He found that “Widely shared norms appear to have emerged that include turn taking in the sending of emails, reciprocity in disclosing details about the self, and respecting other people’s presentations of self, that mirror those characteristic of daily life” (Hardey 582). Similarly, Laura Robinson wrote in her article “The cyberself” that people who use MUDs (Multi-User Domain) “bring into being bodies, personas, and personalities framed according to the same categories that exist in the offline world” (Robinson 94).

Robinson extended the Goffmanian concept of audience segregation in order to explain that internet users are able to organize and codify the performances that they give to multiple audiences (Robinson 101). One example she gives is about using an email that matches the title of the performance someone is giving (Robinson 105). Someone who is an organization’s Director of Development would probably not use an email address like “orc_destroyer_666@burnmail.com”; she or he would use the email address that is associated with her or his job title. Email addresses can act as filters for different audiences.
Articles about unmeant gestures describe techniques for avoiding performance disruptions on the internet. Michele Strano wrote “Covering Your Face on Facebook Suppression” in order to focus on Facebook’s tools for suppressing parts of a performance (Strano 166). She lists these tools as: untagging names from photographs, requesting deletion of photographs, and changing privacy settings. Strano conducted her research under the assumption that Facebook employs teamwork: “...any given profile also acts as a performance of multiple social groups as the posts and photographs include the ‘voices’ and images of various people interacting with one another” (Strano 168).

The results of Strano’s in-depth interviews and online surveys indicated that there is “a value structure in which Facebook users respect an individual’s right to their own personal identity and the right to manage it as they please” (Strano 173). Her interviews yielded anecdotes about people wanting to untag or delete photos because they believed the photograph was a misrepresentation of character (Strano 174). However, Strano concluded that her results did not prove that these tools are used frequently because “as Goffman suggests, we tend to choose loyal team members and tactful audience members” (Strano 176).

Disruptions can and do occur no matter how carefully someone manages her or his performance. Some scholars have extended Goffman’s concepts in order to analyze how people navigate disrupted performances on the internet. Anna Keck wrote about the online virtual community called Second Life. She adapted and extended Goffman’s definition of face-to-face interaction to be more inclusive of “immediate virtual real-time physical presence (Keck 3)”. Keck spent three months observing and interviewing residents of Second Life (Keck 24-27).
Although she showed readers demonstrations of her avatar’s appearance, she did not include images or video of some of the disrupted performances that she encountered.

These disrupted performances ranged from subtle profile indicators to bodily mishaps. The payment information in a resident’s profile, for example, indicates that the resident had made a financial commitment to being a resident of Second Life (Keck 46). Keck made sure to display payment information in her profile so that she would be taken seriously as a resident. Keck also witnessed new residents’ abilities to master the controls for dancing or picking up objects in the Second Life world (Keck 52). Residents used either tactful inattention or tactful attention towards those who disrupted a performance. “This practice of inattention,” Keck wrote, “...was [sic] typically reserved for long term residents whereas tactful attention was aimed at newcomers” (Keck 63). If a resident that Keck and her friends knew well had some sort of wardrobe malfunction then they would use tactful inattention until their friend noticed this mistake and corrected it (Keck 62). However, if a new resident appeared to be struggling with moving around nearby, then Keck and her friends would use “tactful attention”. They would engage with the new residents in order to help them create a more seamless performance as a Second Life user.

Other scholars have analyzed chat rooms or forums through the lens of dramaturgy. Hangwoo Lee, for example, wrote an article featuring the case study of a Usenet newsgroup. Lee studied the users’ interactions, signatures, and other content in order to explore online self-presentation techniques (Lee 2-8). Similarly, D.A.R. Ross focused on a self-organized learning community of pre-service London cab drivers in “Backstage with the Knowledge Boys and Girls” (Ross 307). These trainees needed to complete an extensive amount of training over the
course of four years (Ross 308). The online community “CabbieCall” was formed because most of the training was carried out in isolation (Ross 309). Ross extended Goffman’s concepts of backstage and front stage by labeling the message boards as the backstage and performances in front of instructors as the front stage (Ross 314-316). The trainees were able to relax and prepare for their performances as drivers in this virtual space because the backstage only has one known audience: other cab driver trainees (Ross 316). Consequently, the CabbieCall users used slang and other terms that random visitors and their examiners may not have understood (Ross 320). They “discover adequate common ground to allow the establishment of an electronic back-region in their OOLC” (Ross 322). Ross quotes blocks of interactions taken from the message boards, which provides detail for the descriptions of the backstage area. However, Ross did not follow his subjects to their examinations and training exercises. The front stage of this situation remains relatively obscure for readers. They might have difficulty visualizing the spaces where trainees must give their performances.

4. ERVING GOFFMAN AND YOU

*Erving Goffman and You* uses the audio-visual medium to present Goffman’s material, and it also extends his concepts into 21st century life similar to modern day Goffmanian scholars. The series therefore combines elements of the original material and modern day discussion in order to create a guide to Goffman’s work. The concepts discussed in the web series include: tactful inattention, idealized performances, backstage and front stage regions, meant gestures, teams and impression management. Each concept is defined in the video, and is explained further using a narrative that may seem commonplace to modern day viewers.
In addition to the episodes, *Erving Goffman and You* includes several commentary videos featuring Professor David Ribes from Georgetown University’s Communication, Culture, and Technology Program. Professor Ribes shares his thoughts on Goffman’s work and the examples featured in each episode. The commentaries give viewers the opportunity to gain additional insight into Goffman’s theories.

*Erving Goffman and You*’s seven episodes are as follows:

1. Erving Goffman and You — Opening Sequence: This episode introduces Erving Goffman and his work to viewers. It discusses dramaturgical analysis, Goffmanian terminology, and gives a couple of examples of face-to-face interactions.

2. Michelle’s Story — Idealized Performances: Michelle uses her phone in order to present herself to others as an Android user. The narrator analyzes this situation in terms of Goffman’s concept of an idealized performance.

3. Sam’s Story — Tactful Inattention: Sam is sitting next to a very loud passenger on the train, but does not outwardly display her annoyance. This is an example of tactful inattention.

4. Brendan’s Story — Unmeant Gestures: Brendan meets up with a friend, but she looks at her phone throughout the entire meal. The narrator applies concepts such as given performances, given off performances, and unmeant gestures to this vignette.

5. Chris’ Story — Regions: Chris has a blog that he shares publicly with friends and family, and a private, anonymous blog. His blogs could be representative of a virtual front stage and backstage, or they could exemplify Goffman’s concept of audience segregation.
6. Elisabet’s Story — Teams: Elisabet and her co-worker conspire to prompt customers into paying and leaving the restaurant. They are performing together as a team.

7. Julie’s Story — Impression Management: Julie vets housemate applicants by searching for them on the internet. The narrator analyzes this example using concepts such as given and given off performances.

_Erving Goffman and You_’s first episode is a general overview of symbolic interaction and dramaturgical analysis. The video opens with live action footage of six different stories being told straight to the camera. This gives viewers an overview of the anecdotes that will be explored later in the series. Afterwards, the video introduces some general vocabulary including “sociology”, “microsociology”, “dramaturgy”, “interaction”, “given”, “given off”, and “disrupted performance”.

Two main anecdotes explain how Goffman analyzed a situation. Both of them feature face-to-face interaction rather than mediated interaction. The anecdotes are boiled down to extremely simple interactions: Figure A and Figure B give performances to each other, but the “given off” threatens or disrupts these performances. The first example is similar to Goffman’s stories about social mobility. Figure A gives an environmentally conscious performance with clothes and other props, but exits the conversation in a large SUV. Figure A’s given performance about Figure A’s lifestyle contradicts Figure A’s given off performance about Figure A’s lifestyle. Figure B will notice this contradiction and might harbor some doubts that Figure A cares about the environment (see Figure 3). Large gas-guzzling cars may not have been prevalent when Goffman conducted his research, but his dramaturgical concepts still apply.
figure 3. This is a screenshot from *Erving Goffman and You*’s opening sequence that shows one of two examples featuring face-to-face interaction; “Erving Goffman and You – Opening Sequence”; *Erving Goffman and You*; Sara Levine; 2014
figure 4. This is a screenshot from *Erving Goffman and You*’s opening sequence that shows one of two examples featuring face-to-face interaction; “*Erving Goffman and You – Opening Sequence*”; *Erving Goffman and You*; Sara Levine; 2014
The second example demonstrates to viewers that sometimes the “given off” cannot be controlled. Goffman gave a brief list of bodily mishaps in his book. In the web series, Figure B’s unmeant gesture is carried out on screen in order to familiarize viewers with Goffman’s terminology. Figure B’s stomach growls after Figure B declines Figure A’s invitation to lunch (see Figure 4). This unmeant gesture is unrelated to a prop like the SUV in the previous example; it is a given off that Figure B could not keep under control. These two face-to-face interactions between Figure A and Figure B are later referenced in three later episodes of *Erving Goffman and You*.

**4.1 Live Action Vignettes**

Every episode after the opening sequence features live action footage of a character telling her or his anecdote directly to the audience (see figure 5). The composition of the shot provides unique information about each character. Viewers can see facial expressions clearly, hear the inflections of their voices, and absorb each story directly from its source. In addition, viewers can connect a name to the person on the screen. The background is non-descript and blank because the characters are the most important images on the screen. These live action portions of *Erving Goffman and You* are visual adaptations of Erving Goffman’s anecdotal style.

Goffman often used direct quotes in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. These quotes are sandwiched in between Goffman’s descriptions and analyses. For example, Goffman introduced the concept of a “director” as someone who keeps the other team members in line (Goffman 97). He describes this function, then quotes a baseball umpire’s efforts to keep the tone of the game serious, and ends with a few sentences of analysis (Goffman 98-99). The format
figure 5. This is a screenshot of Sam’s live action sequence in *Erving Goffman and You*. These live action segments link the characters’ names and faces with their stories; “Sam’s Story: Tactful Inattention”; *Erving Goffman and You*; Sara Levine; 2014
of set-up, quote, and analysis is mirrored in Erving Goffman and You. In Michelle’s Story, for example, the narrator sets up the quote by speaking about brand loyalty. Michelle then expresses her opinions on Android and Apple phones. Afterwards, the narrator analyzes the situation using dramaturgical concepts.

4.2 Michelle’s Story

Michelle’s Story helps viewers understand situations in which someone may be giving an idealized performance. An idealized performance is one in which a person may contradict or exaggerate her or his current living situation (Goffman 35-36). Goffman used several short anecdotes to explain idealized performances, including one about families trying to look as destitute as possible in front of inspectors during the Great Depression and 1950s housewives attempting to hide their consumption of disreputable magazines. An idealized performance may involve what Goffman calls the “concealment” of certain aspects or activities that might contradict or negatively affect the performance (Goffman 40-43). People in the 1950s probably found Goffman’s examples of idealized performances recent or commonplace. Erving Goffman and You rebooted this concept to present an example that could take place during the 21st century.

Michelle uses her cell phone as part of her performance as a devoted Android user. There is a certain rhetoric that seems to surround people who use an Android operating system for their phones: tech-savvy, unique, and forward-thinking. Android users may therefore view iPhone users as luddites and slaves to the Apple machine. The anecdote points out that Michelle could be secretly consuming Apple products. If anyone found out that she owns an iPod, then her idealized performance as an Android purist would be disrupted. This is an example of what
Goffman called “the concealment of secret consumption” (Goffman 42). She also may not outwardly display any frustration with her phone because that would contradict the notion that she is tech-savvy. This is also an example of concealment. Most people own cell phones in the 21st century, and the brand they choose for their phones is part of their front stage performances (Katz and Sugiyama 74). Consequently, Michelle is using a historically backstage object as part of an idealized front stage performance. If her story had continued, Michelle might have used a backstage conversation on her cell phone in order to continue her idealized performance as an Android product consumer. The people standing around Michelle are her audience, and they can hear this backstage conversation in a front stage public area (Fortunati 206).

4.3 Sam’s Story

Sam’s Story is an example of tactful inattention. Tactful inattention is a technique that audience members may use when a performance is disrupted in public. Bystanders might feign disinterest or avoid such situations (Goffman 230). Goffman briefly described people tactfully ignoring each other’s conversations in a restaurant in order to explain tactful inattention (Goffman 230). In Goffman’s example, people in neighboring booths at a restaurant can hear each other’s conversations because of the tables’ close proximity to each other. Neither table participates in the other’s conversation. They use tactful inattention as a form of front stage etiquette. This example is very close to Sam’s Story, except Sam’s Story extends the concept of tact in order to include a modern day situation. It adds the element of backstage objects being used in front stage performances.
Sam is using public transportation and is sitting next to someone who is talking loudly on his cell phone. Front stage decorum dictates that Sam should be polite and indifferent to everyone else’s behavior. She is annoyed that she has to listen to this person’s private conversation, but she outwardly pretends that she cannot hear it. Sam uses tactful inattention in order to maintain front stage decorum.

Both Fortunati and Paragas devoted their research to the tensions created by cell phone use in public. They focused their analyses on the way cell phones bring backstage conversations into the front stage (Fortunati 206; Paragas 121). Sam’s Story revolves around the way people react to this tension. Sam could also overhear a private face-to-face conversation in public and would probably have the same reaction. Instead of focusing on the newness of cell phone use, this anecdote normalizes the situation and guides viewers through a Goffmanian analysis.

4.4 Brendan’s Story

Brendan’s Story is one of the first videos that incorporate several Goffmanian concepts, including unmeant gestures, given performances, and given off. The given off can take the form of an unmeant gesture, such as a yawn, that could disrupt a given performance. Goffman’s examples of bodily unmeant gestures are listed briefly in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman 52). His longer anecdotes revolve around situations in which an unmeant gesture would be disastrous for a delicate performance, such as Chinese customs of showing deference to one’s parents (Goffman 53). In Brendan’s Story, the unmeant gesture has been rebooted to be inclusive of 21st century distractions. The unmeant gesture in the anecdote is akin to a misplaced yawn or bored facial expression, but it involves 21st century technology.
Brendan’s anecdote is preceded by a callback to Figure A and Figure B. The narrator reminds viewers what the given and given off are, and defines unmeant gestures. Brendan’s friend’s unmeant gesture is her constant texting while they are eating dinner together. The narrator breaks the friend’s performance down into “given” and “given off” components. Brendan is upset because the “given off” indicates that his friend’s performance as a friend is not sincere. He does not have to use tactful inattention to ignore this disruption; he might feel comfortable enough to confront her about it if he wants to do so.

Humphreys discussed similar situations in her article about people interrupting a face-to-face conversation in order to have a mediated conversation (Humphreys 815-820). Brendan can be considered a “Single” every time his friend’s attention goes back to her phone. However, Brendan’s discomfort is clearly displayed through the video in real time. Unlike in Humphreys article, there is no need to protect his privacy with a black bar over his eyes because the video was not captured candidly. Instead, viewers can analyze the situation without having to create “closure” as they might have done while looking at the images in Humphreys’ article.

4.5 **Chris’ Story**

Chris’ Story is the first *Erving Goffman and You* episode that involves the internet. The narrative highlights several Goffmanian concepts including backstage, front stage, and audience segregation. Chris’ anecdote is preceded by a short explanation of how Goffman used the term “regions”. Goffman’s defines regions as physical places where performers can relax and knowingly contradict their performances. Goffman’s narratives all take place in a physical space, but modern day stories about virtual spaces may be extended to incorporate this concept as well.
Chris explains that he manages two online blogs: one is very strictly maintained and the other is a space where he feels comfortable posting anything. The former blog is published under Chris’ real name and contains carefully chosen posts about Chris’ interests. The other blog, however, could contain anything from NSFW (Not Safe For Work) content to .gifs of kittens. Chris uses one blog to give a performance of how he wants people to see him, but he also keeps an anonymous blog where he can contradict his performance of self. Chris’ two blogs can also be considered examples of audience segregation. Audience segregation is a tactic that someone might use to make sure that one performance will not be displayed in front of an audience from a different (or contradictory) performance (Goffman 49). One blog is intended for family, co-workers, and friends; the other blog is intended for internet friends or people who do not know Chris outside of the internet. The narrator does not tell viewers that one explanation is more valid than the other. Instead, the video encourages viewers to look at these situations in terms of various dramaturgical concepts.

If Chris had been using LiveJournal then he would have been able to filter out his posts using the tools available to him (Kendall; 2007). However, LiveJournal is not as popular as it used to be; the generalized term “blog” might have more longevity than referencing a specific blogging service. Nevertheless, Chris uses the same tactic as Chan’s interviewee Millie from “Wired_Selves: From Artifact to Performance” in that he omits information from his front stage blog. None of Chan’s interviewees were managing two webpages, however, which therefore did not seem to complicate Chan’s analysis of regions. There could be a difference in analysis when the front stage is a virtual space and the backstage is a physical space (or vice versa), and when
both are virtual spaces. Furthermore, it is difficult to classify a virtual situation as either region behavior or audience segregation because virtual spaces are publicly accessible.

4.6 Elisabet’s Story

Elisabet’s Story exemplifies Goffman’s concept of teams. Teams are comprised of people who are working together to stage a performance (Goffman 79). Goffman included anecdotes about waitstaff in his book. He was particularly interested in watching waitstaff move from the kitchen into the dining area (Goffman 116-122). This is because the kitchen serves as a backstage area for servers to relax and plan their performances. Front stage decorum dictates that they must perform with deference to the customers.

Elisabet works at a restaurant and one of her tables has been finished with their meals for a while. The longer they stay the more money the restaurant loses. Elisabet wants to prompt the table to pay and leave without seeming rude. She asks one of her co-workers to go over to the table and pretend to accidentally pick up the checkbook. This action might push the people at the table to leave. The narrator explains to the viewers that Elisabet and her co-worker constitute a team. They must work together to carry out their performance.

Elisabet’s Story is an adaptation of Goffman’s anecdotes about how teams operate across regions. It echoes both Goffman’s theory and method of explanation, but it combines two concepts within one story. Elisabet and her co-worker are a team and they are also navigating the backstage and front stage regions of the restaurant. This example encourages viewers to analyze a situation using more than one Goffmanian concept.
4.7 **Julie’s Story**

Julie’s Story is similar to Elisabet’s Story because it also features multiple Goffmanian terms, including given performance, given off, and audience segregation. The narrative is an example of impression management on the internet. More specifically, it involves the interpretation of given and given off performances through online interaction. Julie’s Story also sutures the series together; the narrator draws on characters and situations from previous episodes throughout her analysis.

Julie receives a multitude of emails from applicants who want to move in with her and her housemates. She needs to sort through which applicants she will invite over for an interview, but she does not want to base her decision on their emails alone. Instead, she researches the applicants on the internet.

This anecdote is not as straightforward as an anecdote about face-to-face interaction. Julie discovers Chris’ backstage blog from “Chris’ Story – Regions”, and decides not to invite him for an interview. Chris’ blog could be considered a given off in his performance because it may be contradictory to what Julie read in his email. However, his performance on his blog could be considered a given performance for his intended audience (which probably does not include Julie). The video leaves this analysis open-ended for the viewers. Chris’ blog is similar to Pearson’s concept of a “glass bedroom” (Pearson; 2009) that can take on certain characteristics of different dramaturgical concepts, but one of these concepts does not seem more valid than any of the others.

Of course, Chris could have taken preventative measures to block his glass bedroom from view. If Chris filtered his content or changed his privacy settings then Julie would only be able to
view the bare minimum or nothing at all. Strano posited that people might not have to remove
tags from Facebook photos frequently because they have a polite audience or they have picked
loyal team members as part of their networks. Depending on what blogging service or social
network Chris uses, he might have had the option to choose his audience more selectively. In
order to keep the video within a certain timeframe and be able to explain the situation clearly, I
decided not to include any visual examples of privacy settings.

5. BACKSTAGE WITH ERVING GOFFMAN AND YOU

Erving Goffman and You’s audio and visual components are the series’ front stage. The
entire design and production process is Erving Goffman and You’s backstage region. The
audience never saw the preparatory aspects of the series; this section explains some of the
stylistic choices that I made while creating the anecdotes. I chose to use a hybrid of realistic and
simplistic styles because that seemed to be the best way to present sociology to an uninitiated
audience. I based these artistic decisions on several sources, including Scott McCloud and Walt
Stanchfield.

I used various expressive photographs of the actors in order to animate their faces
throughout the anecdotes. The characters’ faces are the only realistic elements in the anecdotes;
the rest of the visuals are simplified and cartoonish. I animated both the realistic and simplistic
elements of the videos in Photoshop. The overall effect of this style is that the viewer sees highly
realistic faces existing in a simplistic world.

Scott McCloud, a comics theorist, explained in Understanding Comics that simplistic
cartoons are designed for viewers to identify with. However, “when you look at a photo or
realistic drawing of a face — you see it as the face of another” (McCloud 36). The more
realistic a face is then the more objective and other the character seems to the viewer (McCloud 46). McCloud goes on to say that his decision to draw himself in a simple style is a reflection of this concept (see figure 6). He wanted readers to see him as a concept rather than a person (McCloud 37). “On the other hand,” McCloud wrote, “no one expects audiences to identify with brick walls or landscapes and indeed, backgrounds tend to be slightly more realistic (McCloud 42)”. Similarly, in Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s “Reading images” the authors explain that naturalistic and photo-realistic illustrations are specific and structured (Kress and van Leeuwen 176). On the other hand, simpler images are constructed according to a “visual code” (Kress and van Leeuwen 175). A visual representation of a tree, for example, is representative of a tree because of certain elements that the artist included in the arrangement of shapes and colors. In addition, viewers of this image can interpret a wide variety of details about the tree (age, location, species, etc.) (Kress and van Leeuwen 176-177).

McCloud then discussed realistic and simplified hybrid styles. He focused on the combination of realistic backgrounds and simplified characters (see figure 7). “This combination”, he explained, “allows readers to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world. One set of lines to see. Another set of lines to be” (McCloud 43). The inverse of this concept is a photo-realistic face combined with simplistic backgrounds. The photo-realistic face of a character would lose the more universal elements that McCloud described. “Storytellers in all media”, McCloud wrote, “know that a sure indicator of audience involvement — is the degree to which the audience identifies with a story’s characters” (McCloud 42). Photo-realistic faces interacting with a simplified environment might not be an effective strategy for drawing viewers into the story — unless the storyteller does not want
figure 6. This is a selection of panels in which McCloud explains why he drew himself using a simple style.; *Understanding Comics*; McCloud
figure 7. This is a selection of panels in which McCloud introduces the concept of a hybrid art style.; *Understanding Comics*; McCloud
viewers to identify with the characters on screen. *Erving Goffman and You*’s style uses this distinction to its advantage.

My stylistic choices reflect Goffman’s assertion that *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* is not a guidebook on how to discover moments of theatricality in a person’s everyday existence. Viewers are not supposed to think “That could be me!” when they see characters on the screen. Instead, they should remain objective about the situation at hand. The viewers might be able to analyze the situation more easily if they are not completely absorbed in the characters. Therefore, it was important that I keep the main characters’ faces photo-realistic. If the viewers are going to identify with anyone they should identify with the narrator’s voice-over. The narrator’s voice represents a Goffmanian scholar’s perspective, and the artistic style of the videos is constructed to help viewers watch the situation from the narrator’s point of view.

The backgrounds are simplistic in order to introduce a different kind of subjectivity into the situation. McCloud wrote that audiences are not expected to relate to landscape features. *Erving Goffman and You* posits that these situations can take place anywhere in front of anyone. Michelle’s Story can occur in any coffee shop, Elisabet’s Story can happen in any restaurant, and so on. I wanted viewers to identify with brick walls and backgrounds, so I drew all of the supporting elements in the stories in a simplistic style.

Sam’s Story demonstrates this style very clearly. Sam’s face is photo-realistic, and so are her annoyed expressions. The setting and other characters are all simplified. When the anecdote opens, the viewers see Sam from a distance (see figure 8). This establishes the idea that viewers should view Sam and her story objectively like the narrator. As the analysis progresses, the camera angles move closer to Sam and her fellow passengers. The design of the metro car
seems more like a New York subway car than DC’s metro, but the details are vague enough that Sam could be sitting in any underground transportation system. Other characters are filled in with monochrome color schemes, but Sam is not. Thus, Sam becomes the focal point of the video and the viewers’ attention should be on her situation. This style provides viewers with a general idea of the setting without being too specific.

The simplified backgrounds in Sam’s Story allow other visual effects to appear on the screen. Key terms appear near Sam in order to reinforce the concepts for the viewers. McCloud described text as even more abstract than simplified images. “When words are bolder, more direct, they require **lower** levels of perception and are received **faster, more like pictures** (McCloud 49)”. The word “tact”, for example, is representative of the entire concept that the narrator is explaining. It appears on screen in order to indicate to viewers that this concept is important. “Tact” becomes a part of the simplified, symbolic background. It references Sam’s interaction with the passenger to her left. Similarly, the close-up shot of the talkative passenger displays the words “blah blah blah” in order to indicate the idea or concept that the person is talking without specifics. Other visual effects include blue bubbles that form around characters to indicate the idea of personal space. All of these graphics help viewers understand what the narrator sees when she analyzes this situation.

It was also important that each character’s face emote and blink every few seconds. Disney animator Walt Stanchfield gave several lectures on the topic of gestures. He explained that in close-up shots the character’s facial expressions are an important part of gesture (Stanchfield 65). Consequently, in Sam’s close-up shot she blinks, looks around, and throws an angry look to her left (where the loud passenger is sitting). Besides the loud passenger’s mouth,
figure 8. This is a screenshot taken from Sam’s story in *Erving Goffman and You*.; “Sam’s Story: Tactful Inattention”; *Erving Goffman and You*, Sara Levine; 2014
Sam is also the only passenger moving her head. She is the most active character on the train, and the objective focus remains on her and her reaction to the loud passenger. Sam’s position on the train also draws attention to her actions. Negative space can frame a character (Doucet; 2013), and so I left a seat empty on either side of Sam. Similarly, it was important to include close-up shots of both Sam and the loud passenger in order to reinforce their purpose in the story.

Brendan’s Story also contains strategically placed negative space and textual graphics (see figure 9). Arrows indicate Brendan’s friend’s given and given off performances. These symbols echo the ones shared between Figure A and Figure B in the introductory video. They are symbols representing Goffmanian terms. In the wide shot of Brendan and his friend sitting at the table, there is some negative space between the two characters. Sometimes the space is partially filled with graphics like the arrows, and sometimes there are no graphics. The negative space indicates that the viewer should pay attention to the interaction between the two characters. Graphics like the arrows are symbolic of these interactions. There are also graphics like the exclamation point above the friend’s head. The graphic is placed directly above the friend’s head in order to highlight her surprise. This coded symbol of her emotion appears as part of the narrator’s analysis.

Brendan has a photo-realistic face and the color of his clothes stands out from the red background colors. Red is often associated with strong emotions like anger or aggression. The room’s color therefore accentuates Brendan’s annoyance with his friend’s behavior. His friend is a cooler color, which might indicate her attitude towards Brendan (Dabner, Stewart, and Zempol 94). She also takes up a small amount of space in proportion to the majority of red in the shot (Dabner, Stewart, and Zempol 93), which highlights her presence. Brendan’s friend does not
figure 9. This is a screenshot from Brendan’s story in *Erving Goffman and You*.; “Brendan’s Story: Unmeant Gestures”; *Erving Goffman and You*; Sara Levine; 2014
have a photo-realistic face because she is the generalized idea of a friend. Similarly, the
restaurant’s simplified style indicates that this could happen in any restaurant. The realism of
Brendan’s face contrasting with the simplistic style of his friend and the restaurant indicates that
his character’s situation should be analyzed from an outside perspective.

This anecdote also uses close-ups in order to indicate the importance of the interaction.
Some of the close-up shots in Brendan’s Story (see figure 10) are called Over The Shoulder
shots. Over The Shoulder shots are most commonly used during conversations (Doucet; 2013).
The shot composition gives more space to the person who is facing the camera, and can be
angled up or down depending on the height of the person in the foreground (Thompson 38). In
this particular anecdote the Over The Shoulder shot presents viewers with Brendan’s point of
view of the interaction, and then his friend’s point of view. The screen alternates between both
angles with a position cut (Thompson 58) in order to emphasize both characters’ reaction to the
other. The edit sequence starts with the friend facing the camera, cuts to Brendan’s reaction, then
goes back to the friend facing the camera, cuts to the friend’s cell phone screen, and then cuts
back to the friend facing the camera again. These cuts emphasize the different components of
this situation: Brendan feels ignored and his friend is absorbed in whatever is on her phone.

Brendan’s facial gestures are the expressions I asked him to display when I photographed
him. Sam’s fellow passenger only displayed one emotion, but Brendan’s friend needed to display
a slow transition into the given off. Therefore, I first drew her smiling and seemingly interested
in hanging out with Brendan. Then I changed her facial expression to distraction and eventually
absorbed by her cell phone. Animation connects these gestures or expressions to each other over
time. “...the action,” Stanchfield explains, “must be caricatured beyond what might have been
figure 10. This is a screenshot from Brendan’s story in *Erving Goffman and You*.; “Brendan’s Story: Unmeant Gestures”; *Erving Goffman and You*; Sara Levine; 2014
done in live action (Stanchfield 81).” I asked Brendan to make certain facial gestures and made sure they were not subtle. The viewer can clearly see Brendan’s face move from expression to expression in his close-up shot. I animated his friend in a similar manner. Her face moves from smiling to complete disinterest within a couple of seconds. The animation process moves one expression into another.

All of this animation and design work informs the overall tone of *Erving Goffman and You*. Viewers should be able to objectively analyze each episode from the point-of-view of the narrator. The style evokes this sense of objectivity because it others the main characters while keeping the settings simple. I did not want viewers to be distracted by the details of where each example takes place, but rather concentrate on the analysis of the interaction at hand.

**6. Conclusion**

I took a course called “The Sociology of Everyday Life” in college. During midterms I had trouble memorizing all of Goffman’s terms in preparation for an exam. The technique that worked best for me was to recall some of the examples my professor used in her lectures. She spoke about cell phones, Facebook, and other modern day situations that I immediately absorbed. At the time, I was so focused on doing well on the exam that I did not pause to consider how I was suddenly able to recall all of Goffman’s theories or why I found them more interesting than when I read his book.

There are behavioral and psychological aspects of Goffman’s work that I think appeal to his readers, myself included. He is essentially asking us to re-evaluate the behavioral gestures that we have been conditioned to express since childhood. These gestures manifest everywhere: in our language, in the way we use computers, and in the way we interact with others. A reboot
keeps Goffman’s material fresh, and encourages dialogue about why we stage our lives in the way that we do. I also believe that Goffman’s work is important because it is mutable. His theories have been applied to a wide variety of scholarly work and analyses of digital interaction.

Hopefully, *Erving Goffman and You* is as flexible as its source material. Viewers from varying backgrounds and familiarity with Goffman should find the web series fairly approachable. A viewer could have read Goffman’s book and then watched the videos, or vice versa. If they are already familiar with Goffman, then the reboot could provide a unique take on the material. If they are not familiar with Goffman, then they could apply what they learned in the videos to Goffman’s work. *Erving Goffman and You* is an audio/visual guide for anyone who wants to explore Erving Goffman’s legacy.
Program/Project Title: Erving Goffman and You

Guest Name: Michelle Pineiro

Location / Property Name: Gelardin New Media Center, Georgetown University

Contribution type: x Performance  ___ Other:

Contribution Date: February 6, 2013

GUEST/PERFORMER RELEASE

This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled Erving Goffman and You (the "Programming"). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record: my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the "Performance"). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

I agree that you shall be the exclusive owner of all copyright and other rights in and to the Programming and Performance and will be able to use them forever and throughout the world, and to license others to use them, in any manner you wish and in any and all media now known or hereafter discovered or developed.

I further irrevocably agree that you may use and license others to use the Performance or excerpts there from, and my name, voice, likeness and any biographical facts which may have been provided to you, in the Programming, and in any related or derivative versions and/or uses of the Programming (including, without limitation, any serialization(s), translation(s) and/or adaptation(s) thereof), and in the advertising, marketing and promotion of the Programming in all mediums and/or media, including but not limited to merchandising of the Programming and/or its related products. I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge any statements made by me during the Performance will be true and will not violate or infringe upon any third party’s rights.

I hereby agree not to sue and irrevocably and unconditionally remise, release, waive and forever discharge you, its parent and related companies, subsidiaries (whether or not wholly-owned), affiliates, divisions, and their past, present and future officers, agents, representatives, employees, successors and assigns, jointly and individually (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Releases"), from any and all manner of liabilities, claims and demands of any kind or nature, whatsoever, in law or equity, whether known or unknown, which I (or my assigns, agents and/or representatives) ever had, now has, or in the future may have against the Releases, including, but not limited to claims arising out of or related to the uses described herein, the Event, the Programming, the Performance, and/or my decision to perform the Event. I further agree in the event I bring a claim or lawsuit in violation of this agreement, I shall be liable for any attorneys’ fees and costs incurred by you in connection with such claim or lawsuit. In no event shall I have the right to enjoin the development, production or distribution or exploitation of the Programming. You may transfer and assign this agreement or all or any of its rights or privileges hereunder to any entity or individual without restriction. This release shall be binding on all of my successors-in-interest and heirs.

This agreement sets forth the entire agreement between us with respect to the subject matter hereof and may not be altered or amended except in writing signed by both parties.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: [Signature]

PARTICIPANT NAME (please print): Michelle Pineiro

DATE: 2/26/14

TELEPHONE or EMAIL: md89@georgetown.edu
Program/Project Title: Erving Goffman and You

Guest Name: Sam Fried

Location / Property Name: Gelardin New Media Center, Georgetown University

Contribution type: ___ Interview  ___ Performance  ___ Other:

Contribution Date: October 15, 2012

GUEST PERFORMER RELEASE

This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled Erving Goffman and You (the "Programming"). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record: my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the "Performance"). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: ________________________________

PARTICIPANT NAME (please print): Samantha Fried

DATE: 3/27/201

TELEPHONE or EMAIL: sjf56@georgetown.edu

49
Guest Name: Chris Lee

Location / Property Name: Gelardin New Media Center, Georgetown University

Contribution type: __Interview ___Performance ___Other: Performance

Contribution Date: March 20, 2013

GUEST/PERFORMER RELEASE
This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled *Erving Goffman and You* (the "Programming"). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record: my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the "Performance"). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: [Signature]

PARTICIPANT NAME (please print): Christopher Lee

DATE: 3/20/13

TELEPHONE or EMAIL: acl59@georgetown.edu
Program/Project Title: *Erving Goffman and You*

Guest Name: Brendan Kirwin

Location / Property Name: Gelardin New Media Center, Georgetown University

Contribution type: ____ Interview  _x_ Performance  ____ Other:

Contribution Date: March 28, 2013

GUEST/PERFORMER RELEASE

This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled *Erving Goffman and You* (the "Programming"). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record: my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the "Performance"). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: 

[Signature]

PARTICIPANT NAME (please print): BRENDAN KIRWIN

DATE: 3/5/14

TELEPHONE or EMAIL: bkirwin@gmail.com
Program/Project Title: Erving Goffman and You

Guest Name: Elisabet Díaz Sammartin

Location / Property Name: Gelardin New Media Center, Georgetown University

Contribution type: _ Interview _ Performance _ Other:

Contribution Date: April 18, 2013

GUEST/PERFORMER RELEASE

This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled Erving Goffman and You (the "Programming"). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record: my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the "Performance"). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: [Signature]

PARTICIPANT NAME (please print): Elisabet Díaz Sammartin

DATE: 26/ Feb/ 2014

TELEPHONE or EMAIL: (202) 734-0560
Program/Project Title: *Eveing Goffman and You*

Guest Name: *Julie Espinosa*

Location / Property Name: Gelardin New Media Center, Georgetown University

Contribution type: _x_ Performance  
 Other:  

Contribution Date: April 1, 2013

**GUEST/PERFORMER RELEASE:**

This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled *Eveing Goffman and You* (the "Progrmming"). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the "Performance"). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

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**PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:**

**PARTICIPANT NAME (please print):** Julie Espinosa

**DATE:** 3/25/14

**TELEPHONE or EMAIL:** jcespinosa@gmail.com
Program/Project Title: Erving Goffman and You

Guest Name: David Ribes

Location / Property Name: Car Barn, 3520 Prospect St. NW Washington, DC 20007

Contribution type: _ Interview _ Performance ___ Other:

Contribution Date: April 10, 2013

GUEST/PERFORMER RELEASE
This release is made to allow you, Sara Levine, to include me as a guest/performer in a production and/or publication tentatively entitled Erving Goffman and You (the “Programming”). I am giving this release in consideration for you allowing me to participate as a guest performer in the Programming and I recognize that my signature on this release is a condition of your permitting me to be a guest on or a performer in the Programming or both. I agree that you may tape, photograph, and record: my voice and conversation (including sounds, and any performance of musical composition(s), signs, logos and articles contained in or about Property, for use in and in connection with the Programming (the “Performance”). I also understand and agree that this Programming is a non-guild production and there will be no residual or any other type of payment due in connection with my Performance.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: __________________________________________________________________________

PARTICIPANT NAME (please print): David Ribes

DATE: __________________________________________________________________________

TELEPHONE or EMAIL: 212-387-7000
Works Cited


