

Goffmans theory for interaction in society sociology essay



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Goffman examines society through individuals face-to-face interactions in everyday life. An important point of his theory is how individuals present themselves in everyday life, when they come to contact with others. This contact signals the activation of the ritual mechanism. Those mechanisms are being activated automatically each time we are coming to interaction with others. They consist of social values and express all the expected reactions, which individuals should have in different situations. The reason why these mechanisms are activated automatically is because we have embodied them during the period of socialization and through imitation. Consequently, those mechanisms give us the possibility to understand and foresee how we must react in different interactions, as well as to forego and protect ourselves from potential moments of disgrace and embarrassment. If we do not find a way to manage those moments when they occur, can lead in the collapse of interaction (Goffman, 1959: 12).

The main purpose of individuals is to manipulate the impressions that others form about them (impression management). Individuals, when they are acting on the stage, employ unconsciously different “front” (means of expression). The “front” is comprised from two parts: the “setting” which is the scene in which individuals are acting and the “personal front” which concerns the natural characteristics and specific means of expression of each individual. Furthermore, Goffman divides “personal front” into “appearance” and “manner”. “Appearance” is the external characteristics and “manner” is the means of expressions, like the language, the body, face expressions, which individuals adopt during their performance (Goffman,

1953,: 22-24). In addition, individuals use symbols to display their positions and the role they aim to play (Goffman, Dec. 1951: 294).

Forby there is the “ backstage”, where individuals make their rehearsal for their performance. Namely, which features of themselves, they will cover in order to manipulate their observers. Parallel, only when they are on the backstage, can be their real selves, whereon they have to tackle with their real feelings, which have no relation to the feelings they project on the stage. Nevertheless, Goffman notes that the formation of a role is being strongly affected by the personality, the experience, and the culture of each individual (Swingewood, 2000: 176).

How academic professors maintain their dominant position in the classroom.

The academic professor’s front is his class and what this class includes is the “ setting”. His performance takes place while he is teaching. Of course the professor must have a certain style of clothing, for instance he cannot appear in the classroom wearing a sport outfit. Also, he must talk and behave in a way which will attribute him prestige. For instance, the professor will not use slang language during his teaching, on the contrary, he will use a sophisticated vocabulary. Furthermore, according to Goffman, first impression is of vital importance. Thus, in his first lecture, he must pay attention to his first impression, because this will form the relation of domination between the professor and the students (Goffman, 1959: 12). Even if he becomes more lenient with his students over the years, he should attempt continually to sustain his authority (impression management).

On the other hand, when the professor ends up alone in the classroom (backstage) he can be his real self. Coincidentally at this point he can prepare himself for the teaching (performance) and he can try to limit things which could reduce his pole performance. On the whole, professor possesses a status, which nobody can call in question, regardless of the role he adopts. This is happening because he has certifications of his capacity, which is his degree, which is recognizable from the society (Goffman, 1951: 297). In other words, there can be doubt about his efficiency at work but not for his capacity as a professor.

Bourdieu's theory.

Bourdieu in contrast with Goffman considers society from a distant viewpoint. He is not centre on individuals' interaction but he combines them with social structures. He deems that sociologists should overcome the persistence of the contrast between objectivism and subjectivism. We should observe society as a whole including both, structures and actors. Thereby, he creates a theory based on a schema, which constitutes from three main parts: the field, the capital, and the habitus. Each part is directly connected with the others and functions parallel.

The first part is the field. Fields are the social structures, the various spheres of life. While fields exert influence to each other, there are autonomous enough (relative autonomous) in order to be able to study them. Each field has its own clear boundaries, logic and sphere of values, with which people must be obeyed. People in order to be able to enter a field, should have certain resources according to the demands of each field (Wacquant, 2008: 269). Those resources are the capitals, which are unequal distributed in the <https://assignbuster.com/goffmans-theory-for-interaction-in-society-sociology-essay/>

society (Swartz, 2002: 655). People, who have more capitals, have more chances to succeed in different fields (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). This is why Bourdieu grasps fields as arenas in which people struggle constantly. Those who have a big part of capital, struggle to maintain their domination and those who have limited capitals, try for their benefits to invert the domination of the former. Thus field is never static. It is moving, changing, evolving.

On the second part of the triadic schema is capital. Capitals are the means of resources which enable people to acquire benefits. Power is in each field different. Bourdieu divides Capital in four categories: economic, cultural, social and symbols. Economic Capital is consisted by money. This capital is very important because every capital can be converted to economic capital. People, who have largely the economic capital, can easier acquire the other three capitals. Then is the Culture Capital, which is consisted by three forms:

The Embodied State concerns the stimuli which people get from their environment during their upbringing and socialization. People receive them unconsciousness or passive-coercive via their families, their culture or traditions. However this does not mean that they acquire them instantaneously. On the contrary, people embodied them over the years according to their habitus. Also in this state, people form their cultivation. People's cultivation derives, apart from the stimuli of the environment, also from the amount of time and effort they consumed to gain it (Bourdieu, 1986: 244-245).

The other form is the Objectified State, which concerns the possession of items (for instance paintings). Those items have great cultural-aesthetic value but also economic value. In which way people will valid them, it is related with their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986: 245-246).

The third form of Cultural Capital is the Institutionalized State. This state embraces the official documents, that is, they have institutional recognition. Those certifications denote the level of education of each person (Bourdieu, 1986: 246-247).

Moreover, there is the Social Capital. Social Capital is people's connections which they have or acquire within social networks. Those connections are either positive or negative. In other words, can help people or can make their lives difficult.

Finally, it is the Symbolic Capital, which has to do with the symbols of power. People who possess the symbolic authority can dominate in one or more fields. Those who have it are in the position to decide what is good and what is bad and exert it via recognition and approval and disapproval. Recognition of what people are doing is enjoyable for them. For, people through recognition are becoming established. Symbolic authority can be big in a field while can be mild or small in others. Also symbolic power is hierarchical. It is a circle of alternations of power. Thus there is a constant struggle for the acquisition of power but it is happening unconsciously.

The third part of the schema is Habitus. Habitus is our history, the inheritance of cultural capital. Namely it is embodied of our experiences. The creation of social groups is based on people's common experiences, hence <https://assignbuster.com/goffmans-theory-for-interaction-in-society-sociology-essay/>

habitus is person's beliefs and dispositions. Furthermore, habitus is the social structures in which persons shape their beliefs and ways of thinking (for instance education). In real life habitus and field come always together as a whole (Wacquant, 2008: 269). On the one, habitus affects people's chances of success or failure in different fields (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). However, people through new experiences, which are not coming from the family, can form a secondary capital in the habitus, which is quite durable and reinforced. This new habitus is becoming gradually their second nature.

Examining academicians through the concepts of Field, Capital and Habitus.

Academicians' field in which they operate is higher education. To be able to be in this field, they spent too much time and effort in order to acquire this knowledge, that is their cultivation (cultural capital-embodied state).

Evidence that hold this knowledge is their diplomas (cultural capital-institutionalized state). Also their connections, that had been either academic or political, played an important role in taking up this position (social capital). On the other, depending on the level of the University attended and depending on their performance, they had similar opportunities to find work. The position of each university is not the same. For, there is a rank of hierarchy. Hierarchy it is likewise in the positions of academic professors. Therefore there is strong competition among them. Their main purpose is to accede to the highest positions and go to the most accredited universities (symbolic capital). To be able to do so, they must constantly enrich their resources (capital). Nevertheless, the academic professors have some common experiences that affiliate them to the same

group and allow them to enter in this field, higher education (habitus). But this does not mean that these experiences were the same embodied-in all. That they are professors, do not mean that all derived from the same socio-economic class. Simply they were able to acquire the necessary qualifications and to embrace these experiences in order to enter specific field. Namely, they managed to make second nature another habitus.

Conclusion.

Considering academics through two different approaches, Goffman's and Bourdieu's, I have come to believe that struggle for domination is an important part of both theories. In Goffman this struggle exist through the management impression, while in Bourdieu exist in the whole triad schema (field, capital, habitus).