

Self-presentation in everyday life essay examples

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The presentation of self in everyday life by Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman is an outstanding Canadian sociologist, who built his sociological views around the dramaturgical model of social life. In his work "The presentation of self in everyday life", he explained his views about the social interaction. Although the book was printed in 1959, it is an interesting sociological work that remains relevant in our days.

The currency of the publication in our days can be easily explained by the raised issues. In order to show the way people communicate with each other in everyday life, Erving Goffman used in his book theatrical performance. It was an incredibly successful metaphor, which allowed the author to show all the variety of interpersonal relations with all their embarrassing and awkward situations.

Goffman draw a parallel between an individual and an actor, between the society and the audience. In Goffman's opinion, the way an individual communicates with the people around is similar to performance of an actor in the theatre. Such idea seems to be rather interesting. Indeed, each of us can be compared with an actor on the stage.

Erving Goffman is deeply convinced that when an individual begins to interact with the society, the latter makes everything possible either to find new information about an individual, or to use information, which was previously acquired. Especially interesting are the following aspects:

- socio-economic status,
- competence of a person,
- understanding and perception of self,
- attitude to the society,

- trustworthiness of a person.

Such kind of information is useful for several reasons. First of all, it allows the society to understand the situation better, to enable others " to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him" (Goffman, p. 1).

Each individual conveys information about himself in two different ways. First of all, any person gives information. The second type of information is usually given off. Given off expression is non-verbal, unintentional and often difficult to control. The expression given by an individual is usually verbal and it is what the individual wants to show. With the help of a given expression, a person may make an attempt to look better, to show himself in a better light. It is possible to say that in such a way a game between an individual and the audience arises.

Goffman is convinced that each individual is trying to present himself in the most favorable light. Thus, each person, while interacting with the society will choose one of the following behavioral patterns:

- " act in a thoroughly calculated way",
- calculate an activity, but be unaware that this is the case,
- intentionally express himself in a certain way, because of the traditions or social status (Goffman).

It is important to remember that the audience, which perceives expression, can be divided into two groups:

- people who can be easily manipulated
- people who are difficult to manipulate and who are " derived from the expressions he gives off" (Goffman, 7).

In the book, E. Goffman's introduced main concepts of dramaturgical framework, which can be met both in life and in theatre. For instance, performance, appearance, manner, setting, front. On the pages of his book, Goffman explained the terms and the way they are correlated to social interaction. Thus, in Goffman's point of view, each individual activity, which can be witnessed by the audience, is performance. Appearance plays one of the most crucial roles in performance. With the help of appearance, it becomes possible to understand the social role and status of a person. It is possible to say that it is appearance, which is the most decisive element. For instance, sex of a person quite often become decisive element in life.

Manner is the term used to explain how the actor performs his role. In real life, as well as in theatre, people have to act and their manner should coincide with their appearance. Goffman said: " We often expect, of course, a confirming consistency between appearance and manner" (Goffman, p. 35). Rather often manner is connected with a lot of stereotypes.

E. Goffman also used the term front in order to refer to an individual performance. It can be compared with a script, which helps the audience to understand the story. Front meaning can be understood as the first impression, which people can make, when they occur in front of the audience. E. Goffman distinguishes between public performance and off-stage.

E. Goffman notes about non-verbal interaction as well. In his opinion, non-relevant gestures, should be minimized, because there is a possibility that they will confuse the audience.

Without any doubts, the dramaturgical model of E. Goffman is of great

interest. His use of dramaturgical tools skillfully explains peculiarities of interpersonal relations. It is of great importance to understand that in his theory an actor is always shown as an idealized person. In the character all the values of society are reflected.

Works Cited

Goffman, Erving (1959). "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life",
Doubleday, 259p.