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## The Story of the Nearest Relative: Shifts in Footing in Dramaturgical Replayings

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**Abstract** This discussion assesses the utility of Goffman’s thinking about conversational interaction for illuminating features of a research interview between one of the two authors (LM) and a fellow social work professional. We use this case to explore aspects of Goffman’s contribution to the sociological understanding of spoken interaction. While many of his ideas offer rich sources of guidance for interactionist and qualitative researchers, the value of Goffman’s (1974) concept of “dramaturgical replaying” has been overlooked. We trace the leading themes of Goffman’s thinking about conversational interaction and show how they can provide an analysis of the story of the “Nearest Relative” that is attentive to its live, improvised enactment. Goffman’s approach to storytelling is shown to be distinct from but complementary to conversation analytic approaches to storytelling.

**Keywords** Conversational Interaction; Goffman; Dramaturgical Replaying; Footing

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In this article, we assess the utility of Goffman thinking about conversational interaction in order to illuminate features of a research interview between one of the two authors (LM) and a fellow social work professional. We use this case to explore aspects of Goffman's contribution to the sociological understanding of spoken interaction—ideas that are often overlooked by interactionist and qualitative researchers who otherwise have found Goffman's ideas a rich source of guidance for their inquiries. In particular, we explore the value of Goffman's (1974) often overlooked notion of dramaturgical replaying. While conversational interaction only became a sustained focus of Goffman's published work over the last decade or so of his life, culminating in the essays collected in *Forms of Talk* (Goffman 1981a), there remain some remarkable continuities with earlier writings alongside the significant innovations in his thinking found in that last book. Our article thus commences with a schematic outline that traces the sources of his late thinking and its leading themes.

### Situating Storytelling in Goffman's Sociology

Leading themes in Goffman's later thinking about conversational interaction can be traced from the preoccupations of his early writings. The book that shot Goffman to fame—*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (*PSEL*)—marks his first statement of the dramaturgical perspective that would become irrevocably linked to his name. Yet dramaturgy only captured part of his intellectual production. When pressed in an interview in 1980 whether “dramaturgy” was an appropriate label for his sociology, Goff-

man declared that “I can't take [it] all that seriously” (Verhoeven 1993:320). In disowning “dramaturgy” as an accurate overall characterization of his sociology in the manner first promoted by Gouldner (1970), Goffman was also distancing himself from labeling the entirety of any writer's thought under a simple slogan. Even if Goffman disliked dramaturgy as an overall characterization of his sociology, it nonetheless was an idea that resurfaced in his late writings—an idea that he qualified and refined to give coherence to thinking about conversational interaction (Goffman 1974; 1981a; 1983).

The aim of the sociology of the interaction order—a project that Goffman (1953) initiated in his Chicago dissertation—was to uncover the socially organized features of the communicative conduct of co-present persons. In the two dozen articles and eleven books that followed, Goffman articulated and illustrated the concepts needed to empirically investigate the leading features of the interaction order. Dramaturgy was one of at least three prominent themes—alongside calculation (Ytreberg 2010) and ritual (Collins 1988)—that Goffman used to develop the sociology of interaction order. Dramaturgy, calculation, and ritual provide key themes that are explored in a variety of ways throughout Goffman's writings.

Very broadly, two dramaturgies can be identified in Goffman's writings (Smith 2013). The earlier version found in *PSEL* is an application of the life-as-theater metaphor that was well-known even in Shakespeare's day. For Goffman, however, the theatrical model is not applied to social life *in toto* but is restricted only to the conduct of co-present

persons in the interaction order. The later version of dramaturgy corresponds much more closely to contemporary concerns with performativity. In fact, Goffman in his later writings (Goffman 1974; 1979; 1981a) seems to have originated the concept of performativity that is now more commonly associated with Judith Butler (Smith 2010). It is the utility of some of Goffman's later performative notions that the empirical part of this article explores. In the performative conception, the earlier metaphorical frame of *PSEL* gives way to a view of drama as literal—as capturing some of the essential features of conversational interaction.

What appears to motivate this shift is Goffman's repeated attempts to refine the concepts needed to investigate the interaction order in all its empirical specificity. One impulse driving that analysis was to develop sociological concepts and frameworks that are sensitive to the liveness of interaction in its human and experiential particularity. Goffman's illustrative materials are one indicator of that impulse. Goffman worked hard to find unusual examples, often from less than obvious sources, to illustrate the concepts contained in his books and articles. And the way Goffman achieves a sensitivity to the liveness of interaction is, somewhat paradoxically, through the development of the dramaturgical model. It is not uncommon for concepts and models to be seen as restrictive and distorting devices that misrepresent our views of reality. Goffman (1981b) took a different stance. He viewed concepts and models as *productive* devices that offer up insight, illuminating what would otherwise appear obscure or hidden outside of our awareness.

After *PSEL* (1959), Goffman's first step in the development of his dramaturgical model was the essay "Role Distance" (Goffman 1961). This essay outlines the limitations of conventional, mainly functionalist, role theory, with its simple understanding of performance and unidimensional view of the life as drama metaphor.

Role theory seemed to suggest that awaiting any role played by an individual was a particular self. By conforming to the demands of the role, the individual acquired a particular "me"—"in the language of Kenneth Burke, doing is being" (Goffman 1961:88). Goffman considered this an unrealistic simplification that failed to address the range of attitudes evident in people's actual conduct. For instance, roles might be played diffidently or shamefully. In some situations people "play at" their roles rather than "play" them; they may "break role" or "go out of role"; they may find ways to "style" the role in line with their wishes. Role distance was the concept Goffman devised to cover "this 'effectively' expressed pointed separateness between the individual and his putative role" (Goffman 1961:108).

Examples of role distance range from the different ways in which merry-go-round riders of varying ages show their detachment or disaffection from the rider role to the sexual banter of surgeons and nurses during surgical operations. For Goffman, breaking free from role expectations was not an expression of individuality, but rather an occasion to mobilize other identities than those accompanying the official role. Here Goffman (1961:144) conceptualizes the person not as a role-player, but as a more complex entity, namely, a "holding company" for

“a simultaneous multiplicity of selves” engaged in “a dance of identification.” Inspection of formal role expectations missed grasping the lively human phenomena captured by the role distance concept. What Goffman brought into focus was the relationship between the interactants and their symbolic acts, or, as Goffman (1981a) would later write, the “alignment” that the self would take to its own sayings and doings. This view of the person as a multiple role player carrying many identifications, and not merely a person playing the expectations of a role, presages the directions taken by the more performative notion of dramaturgy that Goffman explored in the 1970s.

If there are two dramaturgies in Goffman—one earlier and metaphorical (*PSEL*) and a later, more literal dramaturgy evident in his last three books (*Frame Analysis*, *Gender Advertisements*, *Forms of Talk*) that is more in line with Kenneth Burke and anticipates Judith Butler—then role distance served as the bridging concept linking the two. However, role distance appears to have been a concept that Goffman largely abandoned by the time others took notice of it. As ever, Goffman’s sociological project assumed a strongly forward-looking character as he searched for more adequate formulations. One resource for those conceptual developments was provided by his discussions of participation in his doctoral dissertation (Goffman 1953:136-148, 217-241). The dramaturgy of *PSEL* seemed to have been forgotten by Goffman’s writings of the 1960s as his interests in applying game models came to the fore, but a re-vamped dramaturgy was to re-emerge in the 1970s, particularly in *Frame Analysis*, Goffman’s major makeover and deepening of his sociological framework.

First, the chapter “The Theatrical Frame” made it clear that the dramaturgy of *PSEL* was simply a metaphor. Notably, Goffman (1974:138-144) identified the “transcription practices” that would render actual face-to-face interaction into a piece of staged theatrical activity. More intriguingly still, Goffman (1974:246) assays in Chapter 13, “The Frame Analysis of Talk,” “what really goes on in ordinary interaction and what the commonsense ‘working world’ of practical realities is.” He opens with a general claim that much talk is not about goal directed activities—making offers, declining invitations, giving orders. He then remarks that

what the individual spends most of his spoken moments doing is providing evidence for the fairness or unfairness of his current situation and other grounds for sympathy, approval, exoneration, understanding or amusement. And what his listeners are primarily obliged to do is to show some kind of audience appreciation. They are to be stirred not to take action, but to exhibit signs that they have been stirred. [Goffman 1974:503]

Much ordinary talk is thus given over to telling stories about the happenings that make up the individual’s daily life. Goffman’s key point is that such storytelling is not about the individual reporting an event, but rather about the individual *replaying* an experience and the listener “vicariously re-experiencing what took place” (Goffman 1974:504).

Goffman emphasized the dramaturgical nature of talk, contending that “we spend most of our time not engaged in giving information, but in giving shows” (Goffman 1974:508). For example, in reproducing a scene, a speaker may voice, or *animate*, others—or indeed, themselves—in their talk. If there is

a deep parallel between the stage and conversation, then it centers upon the individual's efforts in telling a story to recreate the information state or horizon they had at the time the experience happened. This is where dramatic techniques enter ordinary conversational interaction. Events are not reported. Rather, experiences are dramaturgically replayed.

The dramaturgical replaying of a story is also facilitated through the storyteller's capacities to shift "footing" during the story's telling. For Goffman (1981a:128),

a change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and to the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance.

Goffman's earlier formulation of selves engaged in a "dance of identification" gives way to the notion of a "speaker" dissected sociologically into three "participant statuses"—"animator," "author," and "principal." The animator is "the sounding box" who produces the words; the author, the agent who originates the words, written or spoken; the principal is he or

she who believes and is responsible for the words (1981a:144-45, 226). These ideas can be put to work to shed light on the case of the Nearest Relative.

## Analysis of a Single Case

Here we use Goffman's work to analyze shifts in footing in dramaturgical replays in a story of the nearest relative. The extract is taken from an interview that one of the authors (LM) undertook with a mental health social worker whom we have called Nell. The interview was part of a wider ESRC-funded doctoral study (Morriss 2015) and approved by the University of Salford's Research Ethics Panel (REP11/067). Nell works as an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) in a Community Mental Health team. Part of the role of an AMHP is to assess people for compulsory admission under the Mental Health Act 1983 as amended by the 2007 Mental Health Act. Most social work AMHPs are employed by the Local Authority, but seconded to Mental Health Trusts, and LM's question is concerned with whether Nell has retained any links with her Local Authority employer.

### Extract 1. The story of the Nearest Relative.

1. **Nell:** I mean if there was a legal point like nearest relative, that's always a minefield, umm you
2. can ring legal and they've always made it perfectly clear "If you're in doubt, ring us. We'd rather give
3. you legal advice at the beginning and help you out than some relative taking action against you
4. because you didn't," as they see it, umm "Give them their rights, you know, after the event" [laughs].
5. **Lisa:** Yeah, yeah.
6. **Nell:** And I've had to displace [pause] twice.
7. **Lisa:** Right.
8. **Nell:** A relative which is not [pause] well people go through their whole social work career

9. without having to displace somebody so.

10. **Lisa:** Yeah I've done it only once.

11. **Nell:** [laughs].

12. **Lisa:** It's not nice actually.

13. **Nell:** Nooo. But that was that was definitely an eye opener because [pause] the patient that I  
14. was setting the assessment up for had a mother and I contacted the mother or tried to contact the  
15. mother to get her um consent because it's a section three. He was well known. Turned out that she  
16. was in hospital herself on a section [laughs]. And I automatically thought that that would, you know.

17. **Lisa:** Precluded her.

18. **Nell:** Precluded her from having nearest relative rights. And I don't know I just I just thought  
19. "Ooo that's a bit odd." And I rang a colleague and I said "Guess what? The mother the nearest  
20. relative is in hospital as well and she's on a section! Surely she hasn't got the rights of a nearest  
21. relative? " And he said to me "Er excuse me, she does." I'm like "Oh my god," And she was in some  
22. hospital far away somewhere. It was a nightmare. I had to contact legal because she was saying "No,"  
23. on the phone she said "No" quite clearly "You're not sectioning my son." I'm like "But he needs help  
24. and you're in hospital, you're getting your help, you're getting looked after. He's out in the  
25. community and, you know, he's not doing well at all" and they lived together as well, you know  
26. "He's just not coping. He's not well. He's not taking his medication." "No, you're not sectioning my  
27. son." [pause] So had to go to court to displace her but I had to keep running backwards and forwards,  
28. it was [name of area], to serve her the papers and it was all day, for days afterwards when I wasn't  
29. even supposed to be on [laughs] following this thing through. It was a bloody nightmare.

30. **Lisa:** Yeah.

31. **Nell:** And then when we eventually got her displaced and I went up there third time to give her  
32. the papers, she said "Oh I've changed my mind" [laughs].

33. **Lisa:** Oh no [laughs].

34. **Nell:** She said "I don't object anymore."

35. [both laugh]

36. **Nell:** And she said "Oh well you've been so nice about it" she said "Oh", you know "And I'm  
37. not I'm here and I can't help him I can't do anything for him, so if you think he needs to be in  
38. hospital." Bloody papers I've just been through hell and back!

39. [both laugh]

40. **Nell:** It was quite funny [pause] quite funny. So the minute she saw me she said "Oh d'you  
41. know what? I've changed my mind."

42. **Lisa:** So it was actually the seeing of you, she thought you were alright actually.

43. **Nell:** Well I'd come back the third time [laughs] I wasn't letting go.

44. [both laugh]

Goffman (1974:504) shows how a question that could be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” can also be answered by “an invitation to sit through a narrative, to follow along empathetically as a tale unfolds.” Nell introduces the character of a “Nearest Relative” (NR). As Nell intimates, this is a legal term used in the Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA), and clear criteria are set out in s.26 to ascertain the NR of the person who is being assessed under the Act. The NR holds certain legal powers, such as the right to order that the person be discharged from compulsory admission under s.2 and s.3 of the MHA. What is fundamental here is that by using this term without any accompanying explanation or definition, Nell assumes that the interviewer (LM) shares this knowledge.

Goffman examines this feature of talk in “Felicity’s Condition” (1983), in his discussion of the importance of “social presuppositions” and the taken-for-granted in conversation. Each participant in an interaction will draw upon what s/he presupposes is shared by the other(s), selecting

just those topics that allow him to employ allusive phrases that only the recipient would immediately understand. Thus, his talk will not so much depend on common understanding as seek it out and then celebrate it. Indeed, this gives to ordinary verbal contacts a greater degree of exclusivity and mutual dovetailing than one might otherwise expect. [Goffman 1983:18]

Nell thus presupposes here that LM understands her allusion to a “nearest relative” as she knows from the Participant Information Sheet and the

pre-interview talk that LM is also a mental health social worker. Goffman (1983:48) showed the importance of “acquaintanceship and close ties, of the generation and intentional construction of joint biography.” The “cryptic allusion” (Goffman 1983:49) to the nearest relative demonstrates the significance of this point. Nell’s association of “nearest relative” with “minefield” [line 1] foreshadows the story to come.

Goffman (1974:550) contended that there are deep-seated similarities between the frame structure of the theater and of informal talk. Speakers can openly voice another person, often not even present, and notionally use that person’s own words (Goffman 1981a). Nell begins by voicing or *animating* the generic “legal,” embedding or *keying* another speaker in her talk [lines 3-4]. Goffman described how a speaker

acts out—typically in a mannered voice—someone not himself, someone who may or may not be present. He puts words and gestures in another’s mouth...projecting an image of someone not oneself while preventing viewers from forgetting even for a moment that an alien animator is at work. [Goffman 1974:535]

Nell changes her footing with the shift to animating what someone else has said. Nell is here “reporting” entirely fictional talk made by the collective “legal” rather than by any one named individual. Buttny (1997:449) discussed how voicing a “prototypical” group member allows the reporting speaker to epitomize the group through their characteristic utterances. Goffman (1981a:128) explained that a

change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance.

In lines 3-5, “legal” are portrayed by Nell’s telling as advising caution and recommending prudence by establishing the legal situation in advance.

Within the animated talk, out-of-frame information is interwoven [“as they see it, umm”—line 4] carried by a “self-kibitzing editorial voice” (Goffman 1983:14). Nell holds the floor with the connective “and” and introduces the story of the NR: “I’ve had to displace [pause] twice” [line 6]. The word “displace” is also a legal term used in the MHA which means that an AMHP can apply to the court for an NR to be displaced on certain grounds set out in s.29(3). The pause after using the term “displace” may be explained in terms of Nell checking LM’s familiarity with this legal term, allowing the opportunity to ask for clarification. Goffman (1983:51) described this as the central obligation of interaction, namely, “to render our behavior understandably relevant to what the other can come to perceive is going on.” Nell’s acknowledgement that this is an unusual activity for an AMHP [“well people go through their whole social work career without having to displace somebody so”] may also explain her pause as even an experienced mental health social worker may not have an understanding of the process of displacement. Here, LM’s silence followed by “Right” [line 7] can be taken as indicating that she does share this knowledge and that she knows it is rare [“Yeah”—line 10]. Indeed, in her social work career, LM has also had to displace an NR [line 12].

It is notable that Nell then provides a story preface [“But that was definitely an eye opener” —line 13]. Sacks (1992, vol. 2:10-11) showed how a speaker regularly informs a hearer about what a story involves in order that the hearer is able to gauge when the story is over. So, Nell’s preface informs LM that she is going to tell an “eye-opening” story and thus LM is able to recognize the talk that follows as such. Nell’s pause can be seen as checking whether she has the floor by allowing LM an opportunity to close the storytelling.

Having set the scene, Nell locates her story back to the information state—the *horizon*—she had at the time of the episode (Goffman 1974:508). The temporal, dramatic development of the reported event thus proceeds from this starting point (Goffman 1974:504). Once again, Nell presupposes that LM understands that she is referring to compulsory admission to hospital under s.3 of the MHA, where there is a legal requirement that the NR must not object [“contact the mother to get her um consent because it’s a section three”—lines 14-15]. In *Frame Analysis* (1974), Goffman discussed the importance of *suspense*: the listener(s) must not know the outcome of the tale or otherwise it would fall flat. Goffman (1981a:178) called this the “first and only” illusion. Indeed, suspense “is to the audience of replavings what being lodged in unforetellable unfoldings is for participants in real life” (Goffman 1974:506). However, what is even more intriguing is that it is not only the listener(s) that must be held in suspense, but also the characters in the story must be depicted as ignorant of the outcome. So here Nell is “surprised” to find that the NR is also in hospital on a section of the MHA.

The narrative continues to unfold in an “intrinsically theatrical” dramatization as Nell replays the scene, enabling LM to vicariously re-experience the events as they unfold (Goffman 1974:504). Nell again shifts footing to reproduce a scene where she is in a conversation with a colleague. She demarcates the respective talk with connectives, making it clear who is “speaking” [“I just thought”; “I said”; “he said to me”; “I’m like”]. Nell also provides another assessment of the situation: “It was a nightmare” [line 22]. Holt (2000) explains that storytellers want their hearers to agree with their interpretation or assessment of the story and may thus explicitly provide their own assessment within their tellings.

Nell briefly moves into the narrator role to set the scene [“And she was in some hospital far away somewhere”], and then shifts footing to replay her telephone conversation with the NR. It is notable here that once the “voices” or “registers” of herself and the NR have been established, Nell does not need to continue to employ connectives to delineate who is “speaking” [“He’s just not coping.” “He’s not taking his medication.” “No you’re not sectioning my son”—lines 26-27]. The prosodic features of the talk distinguish just who is speaking. For Goffman (1974:535), this increases the theatricality of the replaying, where “something closer to stage acting than to reporting is occurring.”

The theatricality of the story continues with the replaying of the hectic and convoluted process Nell engaged in as a result of the displacement process. Goffman (1974:504) explained that it is not that narrators exaggerate, but rather that they

may have “to engage in something that is a dramatization—the use of such arts as [s]he possesses to reproduce a scene, to replay it.” Nell thus relates how she ran “backwards and forwards” [line 27], and that the process took “all day, for days afterwards” [line 28], even when she was no longer actually on AMHP duty [lines 28-29]. Moreover, this description of the lengths she went to contributes to the dramatic denouement that once Nell had finally acquired the court papers, the NR changed her mind.

Once again, Nell shifts footing to animate the conversation she had with the NR. Here Nell uses laugh tokens and prosodic features in animating the NR to display that this is a funny rather than a painful ending to what has been weeks of work. Indeed, Nell explicitly formulates (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970:171) the story as humorous [“It was quite funny (pause) quite funny”—line 40]. Holt (2000:451) demonstrates how reported speech can be used to “implicitly convey the teller’s assessment of the humorous nature of the reported utterance,” later stressing the importance of the sequential—participants negotiate and collaborate in producing non-seriousness over a series of turns (Holt 2013). As such, humor is interactive (Fine and de Soucey 2005). Indeed, our shared laughter over several turns displays affiliation by supporting and endorsing Nell’s stance (Stivers 2008). Cormack, Cosgrave, and Feltsmate (2017) demonstrate that humor is central to Goffman’s work, as is his recognition that humor is a mundane element in everyday talk. Indeed, Goffman (1974:502) notes that “unseriousness and kidding will seem so standard a feature that special brackets will have to be

introduced should [s]he want to say something in a relatively serious way." Coda to the story is co-narrated [lines 42-44], again showing affiliation (Morriss 2015).

## Discussion

Nell has replayed a story with several characters, none of whom are identified by name, but are depicted as categories of persons: legal, a patient, a mother, and a colleague. Nell has also voiced herself as she appeared at the time of the scene, that is, as originally unaware of the law and incredulous ["Oh my god"—line 21]. For Goffman, a replaying such as the one by Nell is not merely a straightforward reporting of a past happening. Instead, a replaying involves the speaker enabling a listener to empathetically insert themselves into the story so that they vicariously re-experience the events (Goffman 1974:504). Goffman (1974:508) concluded that

All in all, then, I am suggesting that often what talkers undertake to do is not to provide information to a recipient but to present dramas to an audience. Indeed, it seems that we spend most of our time not engaged in giving information but in giving shows.

Goffman acknowledges, however, that the difference between real life and the theater is that speakers need to convince listeners that their replaying was not invented and did actually occur (cf. Wooffitt 1992).

Goffman's work has been seen as foundational in the investigation of reported speech in interac-

tion and as providing a framework for research (Clift and Holt 2007). For Goodwin (2007), Goffman's (1981a) "Footing" provides a powerful and influential model for analysis of reported talk alongside an important framework for the study of participation. He argues that "participation seems absolutely central to the dialogic organization of human language" (Goodwin 2007:17), but concludes that Goffman's model has limitations in relation to hearers in an interaction. Goodwin (2007:24) demonstrates in his analysis that hearers co-participate in that a hearer may become a speaker and vice versa, engage in "detailed analysis of the unfolding structure of that talk," and "use the analysis to make projections relevant to their own participation in it." He thus proposes that we move from static typologies to analyzing participation in talk as it unfolds over the course of the interaction in order to display the routine mutual reflexivity—the mutual monitoring of what each party is doing and its implications for the action that is developing—that is essential to participation. This is what we have attempted to do in our analysis of the story of the NR by highlighting some of the techniques through which the "liveness" of the interview talk is carried out.

Goffman's "writerly playfulness" (Cormack et al. 2017:389) is reflected in the playfulness of the talk between LM and Nell. While we do not have space to present the whole interaction in the Jeffersonian transcription system, a short extract underlines the complexities of "doing non-seriousness" (Holt 2013) in the replaying of a professionally very serious matter. [A key to the Jeffersonian transcription symbols is provided as an Appendix.]

Nell: (0.4) ↑↑it ↑↑was ↑↑a ↑↑bloody ↑↑nightma::re  
 Lisa: yeah  
 Nell: and the::n when we eventually got her displaced and I went up  
 there ↑thi::rd time >to give her the<pape:rs (0.4) she said  
 (0.4) ↑o:::h I've ↓changed ↓my ↓mi::nd  
 Lisa: oh £no::£ [huh  
 Nell: [(?) £she sai:(h)d£ (.) £I do(h)n't o(h)bje(h)ct  
 a(h)nymo::(h)ref [↑huh ↑huh ↑huh  
 Lisa: [huh huhhuh  
 Nell: .hhh £↑and ↑she ↑said ↑↑o::h£  
 Lisa: .hhhh  
 Nell: well ↑you've ↑been ↑↑so ↑↑nice about it she said ↓o:::h >you  
 know< and I no- I'm ↑he::re and I can't help him I can't do  
 anything for him so .hhh if you think that he needs to be in  
 hospital  
 Lisa: huh  
 Nell: £↑↑bloody ↑↑papers [↑I've ↑just ↑been ↑through hell and=  
 Lisa: [huh huhhuhhuhhuh  
 Nell: =back [huh huhhuh ha ha  
 Lisa: [ha haha .hhhhh:::h huh [a:::h  
 Nell: [.hh it was quite funny: (0.8)  
 °quite funny° (0.4) so the ↑minute she saw me she said (0.4)  
 ↑oh ↑d'you↑know what I I've changed my mi::nd,  
 Lisa: so it was actually the seeing of you she thou:ght oh you were  
 alright [↑actually  
 Nell: [well I'd come back the £thi::rd [ti::me=  
 Lisa: [hu:::h  
 Nell: =((>look at that<)  
 Lisa: [ha ha  
 Nell: I wasn't letting go:: [↑huh ↑huh ↑huh  
 Lisa: [ha ha .hhh

This fine-grained transcription makes visible the delicate and intricate nature of humor and laughter. The use of “smile voice” [depicted by the £ symbol], the laughter particles within words [shown by (h)], the marked changes in pitch [delineated by the arrow signs ↑↓], and the elongation of sounds [marked by ::] are as integral to accomplishing non-seriousness as the actual episodes of voiced laughter. We argue that Goffman’s approach to storytelling allows for a sociological imagination in which the “capacity for astonishment is made lively again” (Mills 1959:7). As Goffman (1983:51) concludes,

we find ourselves with one central obligation: to render our behavior understandably relevant to what the other can come to perceive is going on...This confines what we say and do, but it also allows us to bring to bear all of the world to which the other can catch allusions.

The successful dramaturgical replaying of the story of the Nearest Relative requires Nell and Lisa, as teller and recipient, to display and acknowledge that each has caught the other’s allusions over the course of the story’s telling.

## Conclusion

While the notion of footing has been extensively applied by language and social interaction researchers, Goffman's suggestions about dramaturgical replavings have attracted only passing interest. One of our purposes has been to indicate the relevance and potential of the replaying concept for understanding how a story is told as an interactional phenomenon. The analysis of narrative and storytelling has become an increasingly crowded field (Polletta et al. 2011). Most closely adjacent to Goffman's ideas are those developed in conversation analysis (CA). Storytelling has long been a topic of interest to CA from Sacks' lectures of the late 1960s on. One distinctive aspect of CA's approach is the emphasis on the how the story is told *in situ* (Mandelbaum 2012), with the help of others in the role of "story consociates" (Lerner 1992) who co-produce the story. CA's emphasis on the interactional is a complement to the more phenomenological emphasis of Goffman, who concentrates on the teller's shifting stances as the story is told.

*Forms of Talk* often seems driven by a determination to demonstrate how talk is generally responsive to frames and social situations so that actual interactional considerations are evident in CA's concern with talk's sequential organization, can appear secondary. Goffman (1981a:1) mentions a leaning towards the "speaker's side" of talk, a bias perhaps evident in his choice of non-dialogic topics (radio talk, lecturing, response cries), where the talk that occurs is not, like conversation, constrained by another party's responsive talk. The demands of sociality and situatedness are seen to be evident even in apparently solitary activity (an analytic strategy reminiscent of Durkheim's

account of suicide). The general argument underlying Goffman's analyses is that expectations of sociality are so deeply embedded that, even when on our own, we display them. This is the basis of Goffman's late performative conception of self—quite some distance from the "harried fabricator of impressions" of *PSEL*. In varying ways, the criticisms of the footing concept all lead back to Goffman's preoccupation with the "speaker's side" of talk. Levinson (1988) suggests that Goffman's typology of speaker production roles— animator, author, and principal—is simply not elaborate enough to capture the range of possibilities that occur in many kinds of interaction. Dynel (2011) makes a similar argument regarding reception (listener) roles. Perhaps the most telling of all is Goodwin's (2007) claim that further development of the footing concept is most profitably pursued through analysis that focuses on how footing is produced in and through interactional practices rather than typologies of speaker and hearer roles.

In this article, we have attempted to show how aspects of Goffman's thinking about conversation can be used to shed light on the liveness of ordinary interaction. If this motif is to be emphasized, it is because Goffman is sometimes depicted as an analyst overly preoccupied with the construction of sociological classifications. To be sure, conceptual development and innovation was a hallmark of his approach to sociological analysis. It has been estimated that around 1,000 concepts can be found in his work (extending Birrell's 1978 estimate to Goffman's writings through to 1983). However, Goffman signally rejected the view of his enterprise as simply classificatory. He agreed that his conceptual frameworks were formal and abstract in order to

be applicable to interaction wherever it was found, but claimed they offered more than “merely a static classification.” His work instead sought to bear upon “dynamic issues created by the motivation to sustain a definition of the situation that has been projected before others” (Goffman 1959:239). Goffman’s actual analytic practice, as Goodwin’s criticism of his footing concept shows, sometimes fell short of this claim.

Goffman was suspicious of abstract analytic schemas. In a rare literary and philosophical allusion towards the end of “Role Distance,” Goffman (1961:143)

extolled the “lovingly empirical view” of Henry James in contrast to the “abstract view of human action” offered by his older brother, the philosopher and psychologist William James. At the same time, Goffman wanted to “combat the touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology” (Goffman 1961:152). We hope our analysis has shown how Goffman’s concepts of dramaturgical replaying and footing extend the scope of interactional analysis in a lovingly empirical manner to deliver a sociological understanding that is responsive both to its socially organized basis and to its improvised, live enactment.

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## Appendix: Key to Jeffersonian Transcription Symbols.

[ ] Overlapping speech: two brackets mark the beginning and end of overlap, one bracket marks the start.

↑↓ Marked pitch changes.

**Underlining** Emphasis on the underlined portion of talk.

°quiet° "Degree" signs mark quieter speech.

(0.4) Pause length in seconds and tenths of a second.

(.) A short pause, too short to measure.

lo::ng Colons represent elongation of the prior sound.

Hhh Out-breaths.

.hhh In-breaths.

bu- A cut-off/unfinished word.

>to give her the< Speeded up talk.

£definitely£ 'Smile' voice.

heh ha Voiced laughter.

No wa(h)y Laughter within speech.