Routledge International Handbook of Goffman Studies

Interaction in Public Places
Robin James Smith

Introduction
Goffman's concerns with social order, communication, and the presentational demands of the social self – as mutually constitutive elements of interaction order – are perhaps best expressed in his observations of interaction in public places (Goffman, 1961/1972, 1963/1966, 1971/1972, also 1983). Public places provide a site for the demonstration of a core element of Goffman's social theory: that the self belongs to, and thus, by turns, shapes and is shaped by, the gatherings that occur in actual material settings. *Social settings*, and not structures and agents, are, for Goffman, at the heart of social organisation (Rawls 1987). Observing closely social conduct in public places reveals a range of practices and arrangements with which acquainted and unacquainted persons mutually manage their co-presence and thus produce observable public order. The interactional arrangements that hold in gatherings are, at once, central to the possibility of public space and overlooked due to their very familiarity; that is, until one reads Goffman on public places.

Goffman's writings on interaction in public places are, rightfully, well-known for the immediate recognisability of the situations and experiences he describes. Yet there is a good deal left unspecified and some central analytic questions remain unresolved. In that sense, Goffman's writings on public interaction order offer a point of departure. The form that their legacy takes turns on whether ones sees his observations as an initial guide to the micro-order of public life requiring further description, or as an already adequately detailed description from which to engage in further conceptual work. Whatever direction subsequent analyses take, Goffman's writing on public places show that everyday interactions in public *matter*. Whether in terms of the organisation of walking on a pavement, through to the kinds of unevenly damaging experiences produced through what we might call the 'lived politics' of public space and when things get 'brutish' in society (Goffman 1971/1972:386).

In what follows, I outline Goffman's key contributions to understanding public interaction order. I also point to how the lack of specificity in Goffman's writings pertaining to just *how* the arrangements he so vividly and wittily captures get done can be, in part, resolved by developments in ethnomethodology. The chapter is organised in to four sections concerning: the 'stranger' as a meaningful category; categorisation practices and the visually available order of public space; the interactional accomplishment of rules and norms in the traffic system; and, the production and recognition of territories. The upshot of this discussion is to raise a number of analytic questions that pick up where Goffman leaves off; namely, how are categories 'operationally relevant' for interaction order in public space?; how do members' experience and orient to a 'public space' as public?; and how are territories produced and recognised as such in the course of ordinary, mobile, activities. The chapter begins by returning to Goffman's conceptualisation of the public realm.

Goffman's Public Realm
Goffman's 'public realm' is markedly distinct from approaches that being from a distinction between public and private space. As Goffman (1963/1966: 9) stresses, 'no analytic

significance is implied' by his use of the terms public and private, adding that 'in the study of *gatherings*, all occasions when two or more persons are present to one another can be fruitfully treated initially as a single class'. The upshot of the reorientation to treating public space as a primarily situational and interactional matter is the redirection of the analytic attention toward how interactional work is *demanded* of the social actor whenever they are in co-presence, the character of that work, and the consequences for those who lose, or cannot play, the (loaded) game.

Such is the array of concepts generated in Goffman's descriptions of public interaction that there is hardly room to even list them here. A commonality found across the various key works, however, is the identification of the observably patterned character of public interaction. Goffman shows us coordinated practices, not individual atoms moving in space, that display orientations to shared assumptions relating to conduct in situations of co-presence. These key assumptions are well described and systematised in Phillip Manning's (1992) ethnomethodologically-inflected reading of Goffman's treatment of public order. Through the 'SIAC schema', Manning traces Goffman's continued development of four key assumptions that provide, for the social actor, the norms of co-mingling; Situational Propriety, Involvement, Accessibility, and Civil Inattention.

'Situational propriety' relates both to the meaning of a given action as tied to its context, as well as how actions are oriented to the 'contextual constraints' (Manning, 1992: 11) of a given setting. 'Situational propriety' links situated actions and what Goffman saw as the structural obligations of interaction that are the components of interaction order (Rawls, 1987). Importantly, Goffman shows that everyday actions can come to be *situationally* treated as 'normal', 'deviant', 'threatening', 'appropriate' 'crazy' and so on in relation to the context in which they are done, and in and through the moral judgement of their audiences.

'Involvement' relates to the demands upon the individual to demonstrate publicly their commitment to the situation they are party to. Like many of Goffman's concepts, involvement demands are treated as a continuum ranging from 'tight' to 'loose' (1963/1966:198-215). Significantly, displays of commitment do not imply cognitive notions of attention but, rather, bodily displays that either confirm or conceal attention and disattention. The solider stood on parade might well let their mind drift so long as their body discipline remains. Anyone who has spent any time on a hospital ward will be familiar with the ways that one is expected to outwardly disattend to what is going on in the next cubicle, whilst separated by only a thin curtain. Such 'attention displays' (Smith, 2017), or their concealment, are co-constitutive elements of the situation along the materiality and moral standards of the setting.

When in the presence of others, individuals manage their 'accessibility' to others, whilst also recognising the degree of accessibility of others. Goffman (1963/1966) writes, for example, of 'involvement shields' that can be employed in avoiding interaction with others, with the reading of a newspaper on public transport being a key prop. Today, people can signal unavailability to, for example, charity workers on a high street, by appearing engrossed with the mobile phones. Such displays create additional work for any access ritual such that the other may not think it worth their while. Pivotally, the degree to which these rituals of accessibility are respected or transgressed – by violations of one or more of the various territories of the self (Goffman 1971/72) – are in many ways at the heart of how the social actor comes to view themselves as a full person, in 'good', or diminished and excluded standing and, for Goffman, are at the very centre of social organisation.

The related concept of 'civil inattention' (Goffman 1963:83-84) refers to the display of respectful recognition of the other party, without treating them as an 'object of special

curiosity or design'. Goffman observes how this ritual lies at the centre of the continuum between the "hate stare" on the one extreme (for example, that a "Southern white" can give upon encountering a black person) and the "non-person treatment" on the other (routinely observable on city streets where requests for money from those experiencing homelessness are ignored by passers-by). Civil inattention is a key component of Lyn Lofland's (1998) schema of the assumptions that underpin the actions of urban citizens in the public realm. Lofland (1998: 28-34), significantly, notes that whilst attention may regularly be drawn by disruption and breaches of trust and civility in public space, for the overwhelming majority of the time individuals in co-presence exhibit a civility toward diversity. For Goffman (1971/1972: 386), even this 'normal' interactional truce "may be maintained, but behind these normal appearances individuals can come to be at the ready, poised to flee or to fight back if necessary." These remarks, among many others, point to how the orderly background assumptions traced by Manning (1992) are accompanied, in Goffman's writings, by a sense of pervasive threat and looming potentiality of conflict. If the orderly passage of pedestrians on a pavement exemplifies one side of Goffman's public realm, then the other is captured in his discussion of 'normal appearances' and the various forms of potential violation and harm that must be managed, by some actors, whilst in urban public spaces populated by strangers.

A world of strangers? 'Normal Appearances' and visually-available order
The public realm is often conceived as a 'world of strangers' (Lofland 1985). Within such discussions, Goffman's contribution is often defined as a broadening of what is treated as interaction in public places to include practices that go beyond direct verbal communication between one or more parties. In that sense, the actor *does* interact with 'strangers' when in public space. Yet, in a rare direct use of the term 'stranger', Goffman's (1971/1972: 28) includes a footnote noting that a 'Harvey Sacks, of the University of California at Irvine'[1] has pointed out that the term 'strangers' is a 'troublesome one'. Goffman notes that 'stranger' usually refers to a 'fellow user of a public place', not merely any unacquainted other such as a 'policeman or a shop clerk'. Lofland (1998) recognises such troubles, as well as a distinction between the Simmelian 'cultural stranger' and the more common meaning of a biographically or personally unknown individual. The trouble, however, runs far deeper than that. The analytic question is, or should be, whether the category 'stranger' is operationally relevant for social actors and members in the course of managing co-presence and moving in and through public space? That is to say, what kinds of actions is the category 'stranger' relevant for, and in what ways?

Underpinning Goffman's observations of public interaction, is an often implicit but seemingly central treatment of visually-available order. Categorisations of others – what he calls the 'dance of identification' (Goffman, 1961/1972: 127) – are central to Goffman's remarks on the organisation of the gathering, including the contours of accessibility and participation, as well as other well-known aspects of his writings such as service relations and navigational practices. Goffman does not enrol the figure of the 'stranger' in his analyses in any meaningful sense, and the closest Goffman comes to writing about 'the stranger' (in that Simmelian sense) is in relation to inmates of a total institution (Davis, 1997). Although civil inattention might be said to provide an aspect of doing 'strangership' (Horgan 2020), actors are not confronted by strangers in public places but a whole cast of 'stocked' (Goffman 1971/1972:359) and otherwise categorisable characters. In *Behavior in Public Places,* Goffman (1971/72:113) considers how 'recognition' is done through 'personal identity' (a

---

[1] There is much to say about the relationship between Goffman and Sacks and their respective analyses, but insufficient space here. For something of their shared history, see Schegloff (1995:xxiii-xxiv).

name, a biography, and so on) or, in other occasions, 'cognitive recognition merely implies the placing of an individual in some general social category, but in a context where any member of the category can play a crucial role…'. The 'merely' is unfortunate, and has echoes in work that has followed (for example, Lofland (1985), Karp et al (2015). We can return to this below, but it seems that those 'merely' social categories are more central to Goffman's public realm than has been given serious treatment.

A key example is Goffman's discussion of 'normal appearances'. The essay draws heavily on the ecological notion of 'umwelt' (Goffman 1971/1972:293-302), and the vivid examples are coloured by a near paranoid fascination with agents who would use the normal appearances of public space to gain advantage or do harm. Goffman appears to relish in the sorts of arrangements that could be a source of wariness, but which must be routinely treated as 'normal'. Many of the examples feature a, presumably, white, middle-class male walking, warily, in 'urban' settings. In describing what he calls the 'sentry problem' in relation to "lurk lines", Goffman (1971/1972:349) contrasts the pedestrian's monitoring of steps approaching from behind in the 'middle-class environment' (in which they may be (outwardly) disattended to) with 'ghetto streets' (where the concern is more openly expressed). When read today, it is hard to overlook the class-based, racialised categorial grounds of Goffman's analysis. It even seems, from Goffman's (1971/1972) view, that public space should be *primarily* conceived as a site of threat and danger. It might be argued that Goffman is critically engaging with a more general American, middle-class, urban paranoia, rather than simply reproducing it, in order to arrive at and illustrate the conceptual distinction he does[2] but wheresoever one draws the line, it is thin. Since Goffman, various studies have attended to the unequal rights and relations between different groups in public places.

Carol Gardner's (1995) treatment of the unwanted attention women recurrently receive from men in public places powerfully develops a number of Goffman's remarks on how women are viewed as an 'incomplete participation unit' in public places. Through the analysis of women's diaries, Gardner demonstrates the sheer pervasiveness of various interactional violations experienced by women in their daily round. Similar 'interactional violence' is analysed by Mitchell Duneier and Harvey Molotch (1999) in their conversation analytic study of homeless black men cat-calling middle-class white women.
　　　　Repositioning Goffman's observations of the wariness displayed by white citizens toward 'anonymous black males', Elijah Anderson (2004:15) traces the shifting of the colour line from being a primarily spatial to social form of segregation that travels with the black body. Anderson describes the practices associated with this wariness and how 'skin colour often becomes a social border that deeply complicates public interaction.' Anderson's studies of public spaces, however, also yield a view of convivial potential and 'cosmopolitan canopies' which are characterised either by being service settings – food courts, for example – or settings in which space is freely shared by a mixed population, rather than claimed by a group (see Horgan et al 2020). Most recently, Anne Rawls and Waverly Duck (2020) have developed W.E.B. du Bois' concepts of 'double consciousness' and 'the Submissive Man' alongside a broadly interactionist treatment of identity and categorisation and demonstrate, among other things, how black individuals can be treated as 'out of place', and therefore suspicious – to the extent that the police are called – in the most mundane of settings: waffle houses, a Starbucks coffee shop, and their own mother's front yard. In many ways, their analysis can be read as a correction to Goffman's singular perspective in arguing that conflict

---

[2] The suggestion that this might be so is the reference to Beers' (1908) "great American confession" (Goffman, 1971:348).

can arise from parallel interaction orders that have emerged in American society – one white, one black – with differentiated assumptions of the definition of the situation, of situational propriety, and rituals of deference and demeanour.

In her significant development of Goffman's writings Lofland (1985:18) uses 'stranger' to refer to "anyone personally unknown to the actor of reference, but visually available to him". Yet what these studies, and others, have shown is how visually-available social actors are always, and endlessly, categorisable. This is no 'merely' social matter, but the very site of the production of relations in public. It is clear that there are very few situations in which 'stranger' is the relevant category for some action or for some relationship between co-present parties (other than, perhaps, in the quintessential warning given to children to 'not speak to strangers'). Public places are a 'category rich arena' (Jayyusi, 1984: 265) yielding myriad relevant categories of participants and participation. Studies of how categories accomplish moral order as well as the unequal distribution of rights and privilege in public provide both a central area of development for Goffman's legacy and a critical challenge to it. In this sense, in addition to Manning's (1992) important suggestion that the ethnomethodological treatment of rules and rule-following is key for resolving central issues in Goffman's work, I suggest that the ethnomethodological treatment of categorisation practices (Hester and Eglin, 1997; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015) are central to the accomplishment of public order (Smith 2017). Indeed, beyond the more political critiques of this aspect of Goffman's work, a dialogue with ethnomethodological studies of categorisation practices-in-action also highlights how Goffman does not provide us with the machinery with which social actors come to view others as 'approachable' or not, or 'strange' or 'normal' or 'welcome' or 'out of place' or as 'dangerous giants' (Goffman, 1961: 81) and so on. Interestingly, this was something that, at least in his earlier work, occupied Harvey Sacks.

In a lecture considering the case of two unacquainted parties finding through their shared glance that a third party is 'strange', a student asks remarks that Goffman has already described incongruity procedures. Sacks's (1995[I]:92) responds that whilst '…Goffman talks about incongruity', 'has not analyzed how it is that you do "an incongruity," what makes it an incongruity.' There is not room to go in to Sacks's solution here (see Smith 2020), suffice to say that, for Sacks, the scene was to be treated as a methodologically assembled object, which members could break down, and reassemble to find out what was strange.

The relationship of normality and incongruity has been explored further in more recent ethnomethodological studies. Drawing on Sacks (1995) and the development of membership categorisation analysis (Hester and Eglin 1997) thereafter, Hester and Francis (2003:41) analyse mundane observations made during a walk to the supermarket such as "just walking along, a car goes by, had a family in it". They demonstrate – building on Sacks's observation of the hearer's and viewer's maxims – how what they call the 'observer's maxim' provides for such normal features as families in cars, are "are perceived as a single observable scene by virtue of the fact that they are mutually elaborative constituents of a relational configuration." They go on to note that – whilst appreciating Goffman's recognition of how 'abnormal' features of a scene appear so in contrast to the normal 'furnished frame' – Goffman's analytic preoccupations override an attention how social scenes are accomplished by members in the course of routine activities. The radical upshot of such an attention is that the 'public realm' is, then, a gloss for myriad intersecting constitutive activity spaces and trajectories, and 'strangers' a gloss for the myriad categorial relevancies in play that, arguably, Goffman begins to point us toward seeing.

Rules and trust in the traffic system

In arguably the most serious and sustained treatment of interaction in public space since Goffman – drawing on the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, ethnomethodology and analyses of membership categorisation practices – Lee and Watson (1993:83) *begin* from the position that "…public space is not a *tout court* a 'world of strangers'". They go on to demonstrate how membership categorisation practices are significant for the organisation of public space in ways go beyond descriptions of persons or role or status. In their analysis of video materials gathered in Paris and Manchester, Lee and Watson note the salience of categories such as 'walker-through', 'browser', 'potential customer' as well as 'turn-generated categories' such 'back-of-queue', 'next-in-line' and so on (see Watson 2015). Such categorisations are highly significant for the building of the social order of public space and, indeed, its observability in the first instance *as* an orderly realm of social interaction (Carlin 2003). Such ethnomethodological studies demonstrate how public space might be thought of less as a 'realm of interaction' inhabited by actors, and more as an "assembled object", *staffed* by members (Garfinkel 2002). A key analytic question asked by Lee and Watson of future studies of interaction in public space is how do members recognisably orient to and produce a space *as* a public space? In pursuing this line of inquiry, empirically, de Stefani and Mondada (2018:268), for example, convincingly demonstrate how encounters between variously categorially positioned members, do not simply occur *in* public space but describe how 'by initiating the encounter in specific ways, the participants also categorize the kind of "public space" in which they are navigating.' Such recent ethnomethodological and conversation analytic work has done much to explicate the constitutive, reflexive, relationship between action, setting, and social order and, in doing so, adds the 'how' to Goffman's 'what'.

Goffman's interest in mundane public interactions was primarily concerned with the explication of how actions related to the "ground rules" which both constrain and enable action (Goffman, 1971 14). For Goffman, such ground rules are the bed rock of social practices which are employed by the social actor in public space in "patterned adaptations to the rules". Central to Goffman's (1971 39-40) view of the organisation of public space is, then, the relationship between 'rules' and 'trust'. For Goffman, 'rules by convention' are generated in conditions relating to strategic considerations of potential gain or its absence, and there remains the characteristic spectre of doubt in our dealings with co-present others.

Goffman's attention to 'vehicular units' (1971:40) such as "withs" – that is groups of two or more people observably walking together – as well as his remarks on 'piloting the shell' – the shell being an individuals 'outer layer' ranging from clothing, through cars, to submarines – shone light on previously taken for granted aspects of social life pertains to mobility systems (see Jensen 2006, 2010, and this collection). Goffman's remarks on the traffic system are highly instructive as to the kinds of interactional work required in production of the order of the 'traffic system' and represent an early effort to treat such matters as primarily social, rather than cognitive. It is also important to highlight how these rules were understood by Goffman to be situational matters. There remains, however, an overly structuralist tenor of 'rule-following behaviour' in which action is seen to be constrained by a structurally defined range of available options (Manning, 1992). This element of Goffman's work is represented in the collection *People and Places* (Birenbaum and Sagarin, 1973) which variously aims to empirically systematise many of Goffman's observations (see, in particular, Wolff, 1973). Yet, such efforts at formalisation do not quite reveal – and, indeed, perhaps further obscure – how, and through what apparatus, ground rules are generated in the first instance. The 'rules'

themselves, however, receive an extended consideration in his discussion of interaction order in 'the traffic system' and provide further avenues for exploration.

Pedestrian practices were pursued in an early and classic study by Ryave and Schenkein (1974). That study considered how Goffmanian 'withs' are produced *and* recognised by the co-ordinated movements of individuals on pavements. Importantly, Ryave and Schenkein (1974:265) use the verb 'doing' in treating walking 'as the concerted accomplishment of members of the community involved as a matter of course in its production and recognition.' As such, Ryave and Schenkein (1974) are less concerned with general 'rules' of public space – for example 'don't walk through a hand-holding couple' – but, rather, *how* walking is methodically done such that mobile formations are observably recognised in the kinds of activities, proprieties, and acceptable forms of conduct that the fact of walking-together *in itself* provides for.

Ground rules, of the sort described at length by Goffman (e.g. 1971:30-31), might be, then, reconsidered as generated in and through members' methodic practices, rather than straightforwardly guiding them. Put another way, the rules are 'built in' to the activity itself. Any observable public order is thus a *by-product* of the artful methods employed by members in navigating public space. As noted by Lee and Watson (1993:85-86) 'rules' (e.g. keep to the right) and 'norms' (e.g. the 'normal' pace of walking) are glosses under which 'arrays of conjointly produced practices' are gathered. From an ethnomethodological point of view, constitutive rules and Goffman's 'norms of co-mingling' are highly situational and are 'applied', *mutatis mutandis,* by members in respect of the building of the emergent order of a given setting. In this way, Goffman's observations miss the detail of the artful practices of social actors moving together in public, as displayed by members for co-present others, and misconstrues how 'trust' is oriented to and accomplished as a practical matter.

Ethnomethodological studies of road-crossing have shown how what can be glossed as the 'trust' that one party will not cause harm or loss of face to the other (Goffman 1971:127-128), is a matter of the fine-grained coordination of the 'rights of way', achieved in relation to materiality of the setting, locally-established categorical-relevancies, and forms of embodied accountability (Smith 2017a). Such practices do not, then, have to be viewed through the management of challenge and conflict, as they are by Goffman. A nice example of pedestrian's artfulness is provided in Liberman's (2013) study of a busy intersection by students. The students resolutely disattend to the present road traffic by, for example, continuing in a conversation. This 'doing being oblivious' is, importantly, a method generated *by* the setting and is not treated as a challenge or confrontation or breaching of norms by the drivers trying to get through the intersection. Such artfully-methodic practices have been described in a range of contemporary studies featuring classically Goffmanian settings, and, notably, the intersection of pedestrian and road traffic (e.g. Haddington and Rauniomaa 2014; Tuncer et al 2020). Eric Laurier's (2019: 80) study of the under-appreciated civility between drivers and pedestrians show Goffman's analysis of the piloting of the 'shell' misses the distinctiveness of navigating the traffic system within a car and how 'members of traffic formulate who they are dealing with as either the car (e.g. "what is that Ford doing?") or the driver ("what is that guy doing?")'. Ethnomethodological studies of mobile interactions in public space thus respecify 'rules' and 'norms' as elements accomplished in the ongoing flow of members' naturally occurring activities with the orderly appearances of that scene as a by-product of their concerted work.

Territories and claims

For Goffman (1971:51) 'at the centre of social organisation is the concept of claims, and, around this centre, properly, the student must consider the vicissitudes of maintaining them'. In the essay, 'Territories of the Self', Goffman (1971/72) describes a range of preserves starting with the spatial – such as personal space or the 'stall' – to those that are not, such as an individual's 'informational preserve'. The significance of Goffman's contribution here cannot be understated. There is, in public life, a primordial and profound relation between territories, the degree to which the actor controls what happens to their claims, and their sense of personhood. Goffman's typology of territories can routinely be found playing out, often in dynamic and intersecting manner, in public and semi-public places, from the negotiation of appropriate spacing when sharing a bench with a stranger in a park, through to the violent policing of peaceful protests on city streets. Goffman, again, shines a conceptual light on an immediately recognisable, central, yet overlooked aspect of public life.

Further studies of Goffman's particular, and particularly sociology, understanding of territorial have recently begun to gather momentum. One of the most significant engagements with and developments of Goffman's work is found in Stanford Lyman and Marvin Scott's (1967) typology of: 'public territories', 'home territories', 'interactional territories', and 'body territories'. Lyman and Scott include an early sense of territorial rhythmicity[3] and mobility and, in light of the discussion above, a particularly significant contribution in considering how 'free territories', where one can 'feel one's self' are unevenly distributed and accessible.

In an appreciative but critical engagement with Lyman and Scott's analysis, Lee and Watson (1993) highlight – in keeping with the critique that has run across this chapter – the unremarked reliance upon the observation of commonsensical and commonly available categorial relations in the construction of the typology. They note that although Lyman and Scott contribute an attention to category relations they do not analyse *how* those categories are generated by members' naturally-occurring territorial activities. Two further comments on the organisation of territories can be made here. The first is that territories are produced through the intersection of temporality, space, and category. At different scales, they are produced in and through movements of bodies, objects, and information that either observe and recognise them or challenge or violate them. As Goffman (1971/1972:52) notes, a claimant must necessarily 'patrol' and 'defend' their preserve. Yet, as observed in a study of street-based outreach work with those experiencing homelessness, patrolling doesn't simply mark a pre-existing territory, but *produces* the territory in and through the mobility practices of a given patrol (Smith and Hall 2018). Territories are, then, mobile productions and can be observed as accomplished differently in and through interactions between different 'category pairs', for example, rough sleeper-outreach worker or rough sleeper-police officer. A second, related consideration pertains to how territories can be produced in and through the positioning of 'owned' objects in what Goffman (1971/172:56-58) calls 'stalls' and how such central matters as 'ownership' are recognisable to social actors. In another ethnographic study of street cleaning (Ablitt and Smith 2019) we describe how 'ownership' as a territorial activity, gets done in the work of the street cleaner. Drawing on Sacks's distinction between 'possessitives' and 'possessables'[4]– we describe the categorical methods through which an

---

[3] Something of this understanding of territories, and territorial productions can be found in various discussions of contemporary urban city space concerned with ownership, privatisation, and rhythmicity (e.g., Karrholm 2007).

[4] The distinction comes from Sacks's observations of a police unit responsible for towing abandoned cars. It was, of course, their job to be able to distinguish between cars that were still 'owned' and wanted (possessitives)

object, and thus a space, can come to viewed as belonging to someone in the first instance. These two observations may point to further ways of working out Lee and Watson's (1993:40) remark that: "we are tempted to say that [territories] are *essentially* and *nothing other* than categorial."

Despite these solid foundations for a situational sociology of territories provided by Goffman, the majority of treatments of territoriality remain abstractly theoretical with territory, ironically, viewed from nowhere. Any such work that sets out to treat territories seriously will necessarily have to pick up where Goffman leaves off in dealing with *how* territories of various kinds come to be recognisable by social actors in the course of their activities. That people can recognise that a space 'belongs to' someone – whether it be to do with the body, the setting, or an arrangement of 'their' objects – is certain, *how* such arrangements are perceptually available as such is not. Such studies would add much our understanding of the lived politics of public places and the kinds of violences that so very regularly occur.

Conclusion: the production of contemporary public places
Across this chapter, I have outlined some of the core concerns in Goffman's observations of public places. For readers yet to engage with Goffman in his own words, I urge you to take one of the books discussed here to a public setting such as a street or transport hub, and experience having your eyes opened to the array of interactional practices you have seen and done multiple times, but not noticed in quite the same way. There is no doubt that a debt is owed to Goffman for his original, insightful, and illuminating descriptions of interaction between acquainted and unacquainted others in public settings.

In developing this area of his research, Goffman (1971/1972:13) was strongly critical of then contemporary commentaries on public space that made a convenience of interaction for other sociological and political concerns. Despite Goffman arming the social sciences with an array of concepts through which to begin to better apprehend life lived in public, it seems his critique still stands. Often, research concerned with public space, and even that inspired by Goffman, does not adequately describe the actual interactional practices that accomplish a space as a *public setting*. What I have aimed to demonstrate across this chapter is that there is much to gain by paying an even closer attention to things that people do to accomplish the order of public settings. I have suggested that a particularly promising avenue for that task is attending to the categorisational practices employed between 'strangers'. The contribution of such an analysis is toward the development of a fully-fledged, unapologetically, situational sociology *of* public settings, not as world of strangers, but as a world of, and produced by and for, its members. I would also suggest that this avenue of further research takes us some ways toward resolving both the often unspecified character of Goffman's work, as well as the more political critiques that can be made relating to his view of public places from the perspective of white 'middle-class society'. Across this chapter, I have stayed with traditional public places, such as streets. Yet, of course, there is much to say regarding how Goffman's concerns of co-presence, audience, accessibility, and territories of the self translate to online public places[5]. Goffman himself may have been wary about such translation and, I assume, at the same time critical of any hard or fast distinction between the on- an offline regions. What matters for Goffman are the organisational features of interaction which give insight in to the work of managing relations in public. It is these practices that produce the recognisable order of a given setting. Attending to the lived detail of that work may help us achieve Goffman's

---

from those that had been left, and so whilst they might still be legally owned, they were no longer wanted (possessables).
[5] For an insightful discussion see Zhao (2005).

challenge of avoiding making a convenience of the observable, orderly, character of public interaction.

References:
Ablitt, Jonathan and Robin James Smith (2019): 'Working Out Douglas's Aphorism: Discarded Objects, Categorisation Practices, and Moral Inquiries'. *The Sociological Review*, 67(4):866-885.

Anderson, Elijah (1990): *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Anderson, Elijah (2004): 'The Cosmopolitan Canopy'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.* 595(1):14-31.

Birenbaum, Arnold. and Edward Sagarin (1973) (eds.) *People in Places: The Sociology of the Familiar*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd

Carlin, Andrew (2003): 'Observation and Membership Categorization: Recognizing 'Normal Appearances' in Public Space'. *Journal of Mundane Behaviour*, 4(1):77-90.

Davis, Murray S. (1997): 'Georg Simmel and Erving Goffman: Legitimators of the Sociological Investigation of Human Experience'. *Qualitative Sociology,* 20(3):369-388.

de Stefani, Elwys and Lorenza Mondada (2018): 'Encounters in public space: How acquainted versus unacquainted persons establish social and spatial arrangements.' *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 51(3):248-270.

Duneier, Mitchell and Harvey Molotch (1999): 'Talking city trouble: Interactional vandalism, social inequality, and the "urban interaction problem".' *American Journal of Sociology*, 104(5):1263-1295.

Gardner, Carol B. (1995) *Passing by: Gender and Public Harassment*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Goffman, Erving (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books

Goffman, Erving (1961/1972): *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Harmondsworth: Penguin University Books

Goffman, Erving (1963/1966): *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Organisation of Social Gatherings*. New York: The Free Press

Goffman, Erving (1971/1972): *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

Goffman, Erving (1983): 'The Interaction Order: American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address.' *American Sociological Review*, 48(1):1-17.

Hester, Stephen and Peter Eglin (1997): 'Membership Categorisation Analysis: an Introduction' in Stephen Hester and Peter Elgin (eds.): *Culture in action: Studies in Membership Categorization Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, pp. 1-23.

Hester, Stephen and David Francis (2003): Analysing Visually Available Mundane Order: A Walk to the Supermarket. *Visual Studies*, 18(1):36-46.

Housley, William and Richard Fitzgerald (2015): 'Introduction to Membership Categorisation Analysis' in Richard Fitzgerald and William Housley (eds.): *Advances in Membership Categorisation Analysis*. London: SAGE, pp.1-22.

Horgan, Mervyn (2020): 'Urban Interaction Ritual: Strangership, Civil Inattention and Everyday Incivilities in Public Space.' *Pragmatics*, 30(1):116-141.

Horgan, Mervyn, Saara Liinamaa, Amanda Dakin, Sofia Meligrana, and Meng Xu (2020): 'A Shared Everyday Ethic of Public Sociability: Outdoor Public Ice Rinks as Spaces for Encounter. *Urban Planning*, 5(4):143-154.

Jensen, Ole B. (2010): Negotiation in motion: unpacking a geography of mobility. *Space and Culture*, 13(4): 389-402.

Jensen, Ole B. (2006): 'Facework', Flow and the City: Simmel, Goffman, and Mobility in the Contemporary City.' *Mobilities*, 1(2):143-165.

Kärrholm, Mattias (2007): The Materiality of Territorial Production: A Conceptual Discussion of Territoriality, Materiality, and the Everyday Life of Public Space. *Space and Culture*, 10(4):437-453.

Karp, David, Gregory P. Stone, William C. Yoels, Nicolas P. Dempsey (2015): *Being Urban: A Sociology of City Life*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger

Laurier, Eric (2019): Civility and Mobility: Drivers (and Passengers) Appreciating the Actions of other Drivers. *Language & Communication*, 65:79-91.

Lee, John R. E. and Rod D. Watson (1993): 'Interaction in Public Space: Final Report to the Plan Urbain.' Paris: Plan Urbain.

Liberman, Kenneth (2013): *More Studies in Ethnomethodology*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Lofland, Lyn H. (1985): *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Public Space*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Lofland, Lyn H. (1995): *The Public Realm*

Lyman, Stanford. M. and Marvin B. Scott (1967): Territoriality: A neglected sociological dimension. *Social problems*, 15(2):236-249.

Manning, Phillip (1992): *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Rawls, Anne W. (1987): The interaction order sui generis: Goffman's contribution to social theory. *Sociological theory*, 136-149.

Rawls, Anne W. and Waverly Duck (2020): *Tacit Racism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ryave, A. Lincoln, and James N. Schenkein (1974): 'Notes on the Art of Walking' in Roy Turner (ed.) *Ethnomethodology; Selected Readings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 265–274

Sacks, Harvey (1995): *Lectures on Conversation.* (vol. I & II) [Edited by Gail Jefferson] Oxford: Blackwell

Schegloff, E. (1995): "Introduction" in (ed.) Gail Jefferson. *Lectures on Conversation* (vol. I). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. ix – lxii.

Smith, Robin J. (2017): 'The Practical Organisation of Space, Interaction, and Communication in and as the Work of Crossing a Shared Space Intersection. *Sociologica*, 11(2): 0-0. doi: 10.2383/88200

Smith, Robin J. (2020): "Categorisation Practices, Place, and Perception", in Robin J. Smith, Richard Fitzgerald and William Housley (eds.) *On Sacks: Methodology, Materials, and Inspirations*. London: Routledge, pp.182-194.

Smith, Robin J., and Tom Hall (2018): Everyday Territories: Homelessness, Outreach Work and City Space.' *The British Journal of Sociology*. 69(2):372-390.

Tuncer, Sylvaine, Eric Laurier, Barry Brown and Christian Licoppe (2020): 'Notes on the Practices and Appearances of E-Scooter Users in Public Space.' *Journal of Transport Geography*. 85. 102702.

Watson, Rod D. (2015): 'De-reifying Categories' in Richard Fitzgerald and William Housley (eds.) *Advances in Membership Categorisation Analysis*. London: SAGE, pp. 23-50.

Wolff, Michael (1973): 'Notes on the Behaviour of Pedestrians' in Arnold Birenbaum and Edward Sagarin (eds.) *People in Places: The Sociology of the Familiar*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, pp. 35-48.

Zhao, Shanyang (2005): 'The Digital Self: Through the Looking Glass of Telecopresent Others.' *Symbolic Interaction*, 28(3): 387-405.