In Lorenza Mondada and Anssi Peräkylä (eds.) 2023 *New Perspectives on Goffman in Language and Interaction*, Chapter 4. London: Routledge.

Goffman, Face, and the Interaction Order

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This paper re-examines aspects of the relationship between Erving Goffman's writings and conversation analysis (CA). This relationship is complex and seemingly paradoxical. It is striking that, on the one hand, the key founders of CA, Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, were both students of Goffman at Berkeley, and yet the enterprise they created markedly diverged from Goffman's methods and general theorizing (Schegloff 1988, Clayman, Heritage, and Maynard 2022). Given this background, how is Goffman's input and legacy within the CA field to be understood?

In a long series of writings spanning his entire career, Goffman (1953, 1955, 1964, 1983), argued that interaction embodies a distinct structural and moral order that can be examined like other social institutions such as the family, education, religion etc. The interaction order comprises a complex set of interactional rights and obligations that undergird the realization of identity and mediate the transactions of all other social institutions. The interaction order stands, therefore, at the intersection between selves and social institutions yet, notwithstanding distinguished forbears (see Kendon 1988, 1990; Leeds-Hurwitz 1987), before Goffman's initiatives it had never been studied as a sociological entity in its own right. Instead, Goffman (1964) complained, interaction was examined as a scrim through which the behavioral correlates of such elements as personality characteristics, social status and gender could be observed (Kendon 1988, 1990). However, at the same time interaction itself was treated as a colorless,

odorless, frictionless medium, unworthy of detailed examination in its own right, and merely a convenient means through which other, ostensibly more worthy, topics could be investigated.

There can be little doubt of Goffman's role in developing the concept of the interaction order and in advocating for its study (Goffman 1955, 1964, 1971, 1983), nor of the seminal role of this concept as the enabling ground on which conversation analysis stands. In an otherwise critical review of Goffman's methods and approach, Schegloff (1988:89-90) noted that Goffman almost single-handedly habilitated an entire field of study by

> sketching and warranting analytically the boundaries and subject matter of a coherent domain of inquiry – that of 'face-to-face interaction'… for CA can be seen, variously, as following that path, or further developing it, or exploring what it might entail and how, or transforming it.

And notwithstanding the limitations of Goffman's methods, Schegloff also credits him with licensing an observational and descriptive approach to this domain:

> by noticing, and by knowing how to provide the first line of descriptive grasp of what he had noticed. He risked what his critics would call 'mere description'; he saw how important it was, and how hard it was, to get ordinary behavior descriptively right.

In this paper we focus on two innovative aspects of Goffman's work: (1) his conception of *the interaction order* as a structural phenomenon constituted through a syntax of action, and (2) his conception of *face* as an indigenously reproduced element in the moral order of interactional practice. The first conceptual innovation, Goffman's notion of the interaction order, has been a profound yet under-appreciated source of influence on the emergence of CA as distinct and cohesive field of study within the social sciences. By contrast, his conceptualization of face had little direct influence on CA's emergence or subsequent development, but as we shall argue it can nonetheless illuminate contrasting and unresolved stances toward preference organization that run through in the CA literature.

1. The Interaction Order: Structures of Participation and Involvement

Goffman understood that the interaction order has what he called a 'syntax'. In his Introduction to *Interaction Ritual* (Goffman 1967:2) he famously observes:

> I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another.

Persons navigate interaction by means of this 'action syntax' – a set of taken for granted rules and regularities that organize interchanges between those who are co-present and mutually engaged. It is this syntax that, broadly speaking, provides the foundations of the interaction order.

Goffman's development of these ideas emerges in a number of writings, but it receives its most sustained initial attention in *Behavior in Public Places*. Surveying conduct in varying public environments – streets and parks, shops, and restaurants, etc. – Goffman distinguished "focused interaction" and its enabling ground rules from more transitory and diffuse "unfocused interaction," the latter arising from the kind of mutual observability characteristic of mere co-presence. Across these social forms, non-vocal and body behavior play a central role in displaying the individual's attentional focus and activity involvement and provide for the distinction between main and dominating involvements as opposed to lesser involvements of a subordinate nature.

> Subordinate involvements are sustained in a muted, modulated, or intermittent fashion, expressing in their style a continuous regard and deference for the official, dominating activity at hand (Goffman 1963: 44).

Within this conceptual framework, focused interaction -- of which conversation is the prototypical case -- can be understood as a special type of mutual activity that (1) involves ratified co-participants and excludes others who are merely co-present in the situation, and (2) is

treated as the shared dominant involvement of those participants over and above other involvements. Each focused conversational episode is thus a locus of social order achieved and maintained through a plethora of norms governing both who is permitted to participate and how they should direct their attention. These include norms regulating the conduct of unacquainted bystanders and the process of entry into a state of conversation (1963: 88-104, 124-148); norms subordinating the body as a focus of auto-involvement by speakers (1963: 64-69) and requiring civil inattention by recipients (1963: 83-88); and so on.

In later work, Goffman (1979) would elaborate on some of the conceptual binaries evident in *Behavior in Public Places* and distinguish a wider range of participation statuses. Ratified recipients may be either addressed or unaddressed, while non-ratified bystanders may be either inadvertent "overhearers" or purposeful "eavesdroppers." Speakers, for their part, may either talk on their own behalf, or animate the views of others, or animate others' words, as in the case of direct reported speech.

These are highly insightful but for the most part unelaborated conceptual distinctions, illustrated rather than systematically examined using a mix of ethnographic field notes, etiquette manuals, and mass media accounts. Notwithstanding occasional references to the give-and-take of spontaneous encounters, these distinctions remain largely static in Goffman's writings. Nevertheless, with this work Goffman began to chart some of the conceptual terrain of what would later become fertile ground for the development of multimodal conversation analysis (Goodwin 1981, 2017; Mondada 2014). Echoes of Goffman's interest in attentional focus and involvement can be discerned in studies of gaze direction by recipients and the varying methods by which it can be actively solicited by speakers, e.g., through pauses and re-starts (Goodwin 1980), gestures (Goodwin 1986), and prospective indexicals (Goodwin 1996). Correspondingly,

Goffman's distinction between dominant versus subordinate involvements would stimulate a large and still-growing body of work on the ongoing management of plural involvements and multiactivity through the entwining of vocal and embodied communicative resources (Goodwin 2000, Goodwin and Goodwin 1992, Haddington et al. 2014, Raymond and Lerner 2014, Schegloff 1998). The recognition of diverse participation statuses would be a stimulus for considering how varying recipients actually conduct themselves while talk is unfolding, leading to the discovery that complex interactions take place *within* turns at talk as they emerge in real time (e.g., Goodwin 1979, 1984, 1986; MH Goodwin 1981; Goodwin and Goodwin 1986, 1987; Lerner 2013; Mondada 2007, 2018). The analysis of stance and its expression in emotional displays (Goodwin 2007; Goodwin, Cekaite and Goodwin 2012; Peräkylä and Sorjonen 2012) was yet another offshoot of this work. Finally, all of these basic organizational insights inform studies of complex multiactivity and multi-party coordination involved in workplace environments and occupational tasks (Deppermann 2014 on paramedic drills; Goodwin and Goodwin 1996 on air traffic control; Heath 1986 on medicine, Mondada 2011 on surgery, Mondada 2013 on town meetings, Whalen, Whalen, and Henderson 2002 on telephone sales).

2. The Moral Order of Interaction: Goffman and *ritual*

Intertwined with Goffman's structural concerns was an interest in interaction as a moral order thoroughly infused by *ritual*. This concept was derived, as Goffman (1955, 1956) himself noted, directly from Durkheim's (1915) sociology of religion. Durkheim had distinguished between "positive" rites deployed in celebrating or venerating sacred objects, and "negative" rites concerned with protecting them from impurity or defilement. He had also argued that

religious rituals reinforce moral sentiments by the creation of heightened solidarity between social participants.

Goffman's insight was that in the ordinary interactions of everyday life - in greetings and farewells, in how bodies are positioned relative to one another, and in verbal interchanges more generally - persons engage in similar, if more transitory and less intense, solidarity enhancing rituals. Although these rituals may seem small-scale and unimportant, Goffman argued that this is not the case. Through these rituals we achieve heightened involvement with one another, reconfirm the moral order of our social relationships, and the place of our own self-identity within it. Following from Durkheim, Goffman distinguished between presentational rituals "through which the actor concretely depicts his appreciation of the recipient" (1956: 486) and avoidance rituals that Goffman says, take "the form of proscriptions, interdictions and taboos, which imply acts that the actor must refrain from doing lest he violate the right of the recipient to keep him at a distance" (ibid.). These issues are explored in some detail in Goffman's essay on "The Nature of deference and Demeanor" (1956), in the later *Relations in Public* (Goffman 1971), and the seminal essay "On Facework" to which we now turn.

3. Face and Facework

Goffman's explication of ritual in "On Facework" begins with a key theoretical insight. In the opening sentences, he observes that in social interaction each person tends to act out a line, "that is, a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman 1955: 213). Lines, he next states, are irremediable features of social interaction because:

> Regardless of whether a person intends to take a line, he will find that he has done so in effect. The other participants will assume that he has more or less

> willfully taken a stand, so that if he is to deal with their response to him he must take into consideration the impression they have possibly formed of him.

The upshot of this claim is that there is no "time out" from the taking of lines in interaction: each and every act is legible as an expressive "take" on self, other, and the situation in which both are entwined. We are, in Merleau-Ponty's (1962: xxii) phrase, 'condemned to meaning' through this legibility.

Goffman then proceeds to introduce the concept of 'face' as "the positive social value persons claim for themselves by virtue of the line that others assume they have taken in a particular social contact" (Goffman 1955: 213). While recognizing the sentiments and feelings that are 'attached' to face, Goffman primary interest was in its import for interactional conduct. In this context, he stressed that face claims are validated, ratified, and sustained only through the interactional conduct of others, and hence they are uniquely vulnerable to the withholding of such support. Problems of validation can readily arise within the minute choreography of interaction:

> An unguarded glance, a momentary change in tone of voice, an ecological position taken or not taken, can drench a talk with judgmental significance. Therefore, just as there is no occasion of talk in which improper impressions could not intentionally or unintentionally arise, so there is no occasion of talk so trivial as not to require each participant to show serious concern for the way he handles himself and the others present. (Goffman 1955: 226)

Schegloff (1988) criticizes Goffman's preoccupation with ritual and face, arguing that it distracted him from the examination in detail of the rules, conventions, and regularities that are oriented to by participants in interaction. And conversation analysts have also been understandably resistant to the underlying motivational implications of the face concept. In particular, the concept is vulnerable to the criticism that it privileges hidden factors within the human psyche at the expense of the public and visible practices of reasoning and action that

provide the intersubjective basis for human being-in-the world, the witnessable and witnessed coordination of human action and understanding (Livingston 2008: 123-9). Yet, as we will suggest, it is also possible to treat *face* as a thoroughly "emic" phenomenon, something to which interactants themselves are clearly oriented.

4. Dimensions of Face

As previously noted, Goffman's notion of face was developed as a secularization of Durkheim's notion of ritual. He managed this through the twin conceptions of presentational and avoidance rituals and concretized it through the description of behaviors which affirmed the actions and identities of others, and which eschewed imposition and disaffirmation of them. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) subsequent elaboration we can distinguish between negative face as involving the *avoidance* of imposition on the person's territories and personal preserves, and positive face as the *affirmation* of the actions and entitlements that are ubiquitous features of social interaction.

Unlike Goffman's structural insights about the interaction order, which directly inspired work in conversation analysis, his insights about the moral order, and about face in particular, have not been taken up in the same way. In what follows, we propose that these elements can nonetheless illuminate contrasting and unresolved stances toward preference organization that are present in the CA literature.

5. Preference Organization

Preference organization refers to the existence of sequentially relevant alternative practices, actions, or other behaviors, and in particular the asymmetrical promotion of some

interactional outcomes over relevant alternatives (Lerner 1996, Pomerantz and Heritage 2013). As this rather abstract definition suggests, the phenomenon extends across a variety of concrete empirical domains that include, for example, person reference (the preference for recognitional over non-recognitional reference forms; Sacks and Schegloff 1979), the repair of speaking, hearing, and understanding problems (a preference for self-correction over correction by others; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977), and introductions (a preference for self-initiated offers of identifying information over other-initiated solicitations; Pillet-Shore 2011).

But most relevant to the present discussion is its manifestation in paired actions that yield responses understood in terms of the polarity of "acceptance" or "rejection": responses to assessments (Pomerantz 1984, Sacks 1987), invitations, proposals, offers, and requests (Davidson 1984; Kendrick and Torreira 2015), and polar questions (Heritage and Raymond 2021, Robinson 2020, Sacks 1987, Stivers et al 2009; see also Raymond 2003). Across many of these sequence types, alternative responses differ in their relational implications (as summarized in Table 1), and the more solidarity accepting-type responses tend to be treated as preferred relative to non-solidary rejecting-type responses.

1st Action	Solidary Response	Non-solidary Response
assessment	agreement	disagreement
invitation	acceptance	declination
request	granting	refusal
offer	acceptance	declination
proposal	acceptance	declination

Table 1: Paired Action Responses and Relational Implications

As others have noted before us, many of the interactional practices associated with preference operate on rejecting responses and fall into two classes: i) practices that *delay* the response while reliably projecting that it will involve rejection; and ii) practices that *appreciate* the proposed course of action or *account for* its rejection. As we shall see, delay-related practices are sequence-structural in nature and are best understood for their bearing on negative face, while appreciations and accounts are content-based practices with ramifications for positive face.

i) Forms of delay

The significance of delayed response has long been a feature of analyses of dispreferred actions. In 1973, Sacks (1987) showed that delayed responses to polar questions can eventuate in the question's polarity reversal in pursuit of affirmation. The sequence in (1) follows Nan's announcement that she wants to go to a local store to buy clothes and had hoped Emma would go with her, and culminates in her question at line 6:

```
(1) [NB:II:4:26-34]
 1  Nan:    I've got to uh .hhh I have goT.hh t[o  g e]t.h .hhh
 2  Emm:                                       [Aah ha]
 3  Nan:    a couple of things tuh wear Emma I (.) jus'don't have enough
 4          clothes tuh: (.) t'go duh work in.
 5  Emm:    Mm m[:.
 6  Nan:        [.t.hhh at a*:ll. .hhhh Ken yih wa:↑LK?hh
 7       → (0.3)
 8  Nan:    °W'd be too ha:rd for yu[h?°]
 9  Emm:                            [ .t] °Oh::::: darling I don'kno:w°
```

Here, Emma's delay in response (arrowed) is apparently sufficient for Nan to revise her question, reversing its polarity and allowing Emma to avoid a response that would reject the impending proposal for a shopping expedition.

In other contexts, response delay allows first speakers to use increments to adjust the stance taken up in the initial action. In (2), the delay at line 3 is followed by Guy's adjustment to

his previous question, in the process reducing the stance taken in lines 1-2 that an affirmative response is likely:

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(2) [NB:1:1:249–254]
 1  Guy:     W'why don'I: uh (0.6) Ah'll call uh (.) 'Av ↑you go(.)t
 2           uh: ↑Seacliffs phone number?h
 3        → (1.1)
 4  Guy:     by any chance?
 5           (0.3)
 6  Jon:     Yeeah?
```

A similar function may be played by the use of turn-initial elements which tend to foreshadow upcoming rejections. The most prominent of these is the turn-initial particle *well* (Davidson 1984), which predicts rejection with a high degree of reliability (Heritage 2015; Kendrick and Torreira 2015):

```
(3) [NB:II:2:458–465]
 1  Emm:     Wanna come down'n 'av a bite a'lu:nch with me:?=
 2           =I got s'm bee:r en stu:ff,
 3           (0.2)
 4  Nan: →   Wul yer ril sweet hon:, uh::m
 5           (.)
 6  Emm:     [or d'yuh'av sum]p'n else (t')
 7  Nan:     [l e t- I: ha(v)]
```

Here, Nancy's *well*-prefaced appreciation (line 4) is sufficient to prompt the questioner (Emma) to formulate an account for Nancy's anticipated rejection of the invitation.

Many elements of delay are represented in the following excerpt. Here Madeline's request to move into Marcia's garage (lines 1-5) is eventually rejected by Marcia (14), but only after an initial silence (6), an insertion sequence seeking clarification of the request (9-10), and another silence (11). When Marcia finally launches the turn at talk that will her deliver her rejecting response (12), the rejection itself is further delayed within that turn; Marcia completes just the first part of it before falling silent yet again, leaving it to Madeline to complete it and bear the burden of formulating the rejection (line 13). And when finally confirmed (14), the

rejection is immediately accounted for by reference to previous failed efforts to use the garage as a living space.

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(4) [Marcia and Madeline 2]
 1 Madel:    …I was just wondering y'know .hhh (0.3) could-
 2           (.) d'you think you might (.) wanna rent (.)
 3           you know like the bottom part a yer: (.)
 4           g'ra::ge like to me: fer a whi:le, a sump'm
 5           like that.
 6           (0.3)
 7 Marcia:   Wul[l-
 8 Madel:       [I think [(              )]
 9 Marcia:              [Oh- you mean for] living in: Madeline?
10 Madel:    Ye:ah
11           (0.3)
12 Marcia:   .hh It's just (1.0)
13 Madel:    no:t possible.=h[uh
14 Marcia:                  [Ye:ah we- Gina tri:ed that one time=b't…
```

In sum, a fundamental element in the dispreference for rejection is manifested in *efforts to defer rejecting responses with the additional possibility that a rejecting response may not ultimately have to be produced at all*. By these means incipient rejecters of requests, invitations, proposals and so on can reduce the likelihood of being agents of rejection. In this connection, pre-sequences provide another pathway to minimizing the likelihood of rejection, with queries about availability (e.g., *Are you busy right now?*) enabling the initiating speaker to "test the waters" before coming forward with an invitation or request, and the responding speaker to register a competing activity without directly rejecting the upcoming proposal. In different ways, then, both pre-sequences and pre-rejection delays provide opportunities conducive to minimizing rejection.

It is this dimension of preference that is stressed in Schegloff's (1988: 453-455, 2007: 61-63) analysis, which emphasizes *the trajectory of the course of action in progress* as the primary grounding for preference. This trajectory is treated by Schegloff as intrinsic to certain categories of action and the sequence structures they initiate ("structure-based," in Schegloff's terms), with requests, invitations, and proposals exemplary of the way in which a first action is imbued with

manifest directionality geared toward acceptance as a "successful" outcome. Correspondingly, Schegloff characterizes the asymmetrical ranking of responses as centrally related to whether they "advance or obstruct" (2007: 63) the course of action in progress.

> Sequences are the vehicles for getting some activity accomplished, and that response to the first pair part which embodies or favors furthering or the accomplishment of the activity is the favored – or, as we shall term it, the preferred – second pair part. (Schegloff 2007: 59)

Correspondingly:

> Some preferences are grounded in the character of the course of action, and the directionality of its trajectory toward realization or "success"; we may think of these as preferences based in sequence structure – the structure of the course of action in progress. (Schegloff 2007: 62)

A similar focus on the trajectory of action and the polarity of *advancing* versus *obstructing* responses informs the analysis of pre-sequence responses in terms of "go ahead" versus "blocking" responses. Here Schegloff (2007: 62) comments on the summons-answer sequence, a commonplace and generic pre-sequence:

> So, for example, summons–answer sequences are designed to mobilize the attention of one or more recipients for some further talk or action whose occurrence is contingent on the success of the sequence in attracting the attention of a recipient. A "go-ahead" response is preferred, as it provides for the further advance of the trajectory of the sequence on its course of action.

This framework is thoroughly couched in the language of action sequences and trajectories, rather than actors and their intentions or desires. Nevertheless, it bears emphasis that the general framework and the terminology on which it rests suggests a rationale for preference organization that is strongly reminiscent of negative face. Schegloff's grounding of preference by reference to the asymmetry between advancing or obstructing a course of action directly parallels that of

facilitating or imposing upon an actor's prerogatives and amounts to a "depersonalized" hermeneutics of negative face.

ii) Appreciations and Accounts

Once the rejection of some proposed course of action has arrived at the conversational surface and is, or is about to be, articulated, a second set of practices assume greater relevance. These involve appreciations of the proffered activity and accounts explaining why, nonetheless, it cannot occur. Consider the following sequence in which an invitation is extended and subsequently declined. Here two private nurses have been exchanging information about various patients who may be in need of support. As the discussion proceeds, the following sequence emerges:

```
(5) [SBL:1:1:10:368-374]
 1  Bea:     Uh if you'd care to come over and visit a little while
 2           this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee.
 3  Ann:     hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you,
 4           I don't think I can make it this morning
 5           .hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and-and uh I
 6           have to stay near the phone
```

Bea's invitation at lines 1-2 has several relevant features. First it is designed for an accepting response in two mutually reinforcing ways. If Bea did not want Ann to come for coffee, she could have simply withheld the action (Heritage 1984: 270). Its very occurrence is therefore an affirmatively oriented act. In addition, the morpho-syntactic structure of her conditional assertion is also tilted in favor of a 'yes'-response. It may be added that the conditional component of the invitation – "if you'd care to come over and visit a little while" – explicitly presents Ann's desire or willingness to accept the invitation as the primary condition of her acceptance. Through its orientation toward acceptance, Bea's invitation also has ramifications for her relationship to Ann.

Her invitation takes the stance that (i) the state of her relationship with Ann is such that an invitation is appropriate, and that (ii) a visit for coffee is desirable.

Ann, who will decline the invitation in lines 3-6, now has the task of doing so while upholding these claims. Several elements of her response contribute to this outcome. First and most obviously, the rejection is preceded by an expression of appreciation ("Well that's awfully sweet of you" in line 3), which is transparently intelligible as acknowledging Bea's generosity, treating the offered event as desirable to Ann, and thereby validating their relationship. This validation establishes the context for the subsequent rejection and, by being delivered first, transforms its relational import. Second, and in a similar vein, the subjectivized and mitigated framing of the rejection itself ("I don't think I can make it this morning", line 4), by its restriction of the declination to "this morning", implies a general propensity to accept such invitations in the future. The subsequent account (lines 5-6) is prototypical in its focus on circumstances beyond the speaker's control, thereby suggesting that the rejection should not be taken as a negative commentary on the inviter as a person, nor on the appropriateness of her invitation. Finally, insofar as relatively content-free forms of delay (the little outbreath in 5, and "Well" in 3) are also understood as mitigating, face furnishes the rationale for such an understanding. In this simple invitation sequence, then, a variety of practices converge with the import of separating a rejection of the action from a rejection of the person who proposed it.

These considerations are foremost in the discussion of preference organization advanced by Anita Pomerantz (1978, 1984). Perhaps because her primary focus was on assessments rather than projected future activities (requests, proposals, etc.), Pomerantz' analysis is less focused on future outcomes and more on social relations and their maintenance. Her observations can be illustrated using excerpt 6 below, where the parties are in disagreement about whether a sense of

humor is innate or can be acquired with practice. Pomerantz (1984) notes the prevalence of prefatory agreements that acknowledge the perspective from which the speaker is about to diverge (e.g., lines 3, 5, and 11).

```
(6) [SBL:2:1:7]
 1  Ava:     (                 ) cause those things take working at,
 2           (2.0)
 3  Bea:     (hhhhh) Well, they [do, but-j
 4  Ava:                        [They aren't accidents,
 5  Bea:     No, they take working at but on the other hand,
 6           some people are born with uhm (1.0) well a sense of humor,
 7           I think  is something yer born with Bea.
 8  Ava:     Yes. Or it's c- I have the- eh yes, I think a lotta people
 9           are, but then I think it can be developed, too.
10           (1.0)
11  Bea:     Yeah, but [there's-
12  Ava:               [Any-
13  Ava:     Any of those attributes can be developed.
```

These prefatory agreements provide a mitigating context for the subsequent expression of disagreement, which comes off as partial rather than absolute. This sense is reinforced by the subsequent disagreement statements, which are themselves mitigated, as in line 6 where the contrary position is designed as qualified ("some people") and subjectivized ("I think"). Similarly, in line 8 Ava partially acknowledges Bea's claim that a sense of humor is "something you're born with," and offers the contrary view as a supplement rather than a replacement ("can be developed too").

The relational import of assessment sequences is thrown into sharp relief with the recognition that while these practices are widespread across assessment sequences, they are reversed when the first assessment involves self-deprecation. In that distinctive context, disagreements are delivered straightforwardly, without agreement prefaces or other forms of mitigation (Pomerantz 1984). This reversed pattern is also congruent with relational solidarity, and, though Pomerantz does not use this term, the associated positive face needs of the self-deprecating speaker. Additional complexities are evident in responses to compliments

(Pomerantz 1978). Accordingly, what might seem to be a diverse and variegated set of response asymmetries across action-types are readily intelligible by reference to the relational and face implications that infuse assessment sequences. As Pomerantz puts it, commenting on the relational similarity between agreeing with an assessment and disagreeing with a self-deprecation: "Both actions in their respective environments constitute ways of supporting and ratifying the interactants…" (Pomerantz 1984: 95).

To be sure, the term "positive face" never appears in Pomerantz' writings. However, she does employ the closely related language of "affiliation," "ratification," "support," and "solidarity" to capture what interactants are doing in and through the varying design of their responses. In a summary of her analysis of second assessments, Pomerantz (1984:77) observes that:

> The preference structure that has just been discussed - agreement preferred, disagreement dispreferred - is the one in effect and operative for the vast majority of assessment pairs. Put another way, across different situations, conversants orient to agreeing with one another as comfortable, supportive, reinforcing, perhaps as being sociable and as showing that they are like-minded. This phenomenon seems to hold whether persons are talking about the weather, a neighborhood dog, or a film that they just saw. Likewise, across a variety of situations conversants orient to their disagreeing with one another as uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, risking threat, insult, or offense.

And in a later reflection on the paper Pomerantz (2021:11) comments that

> The second issue that drove this research was to understand why some alternative actions are performed so differently. I especially wanted to understand why participants understate their disagreements. The short form of the answer is that participants have assumptions about whether the action in question would be appreciated or unappreciated, approved or disapproved, appropriate or inappropriate, normal or abnormal, supportive or unsupportive, advantageous or disadvantageous, and so on. These types of assumptions bear on how participants perform the actions.

These observations unquestionably address issues captured in Goffman's notion of positive face.

What we see here then is that the two most prominent treatments of preference in the CA literature align with the notions of negative and positive face. Schegloff's conception of the furthering, or alternatively the obstruction, of a sequence-initiating course of action resonates strongly with the notion of negative face (the desire to be unimpeded), while Pomerantz's treatment deploying the notions of affiliation, ratification etc. resonates just as strongly with the notion of positive face (the desire for affirmation). To observe this contrast is not to suggest that either treatment is superior to the other. Rather both elements are, as Goffman originally suggested, co-implicated in almost every course of action, and provide a framework in terms of which a large matrix of asymmetrical practices become both intelligible and "reasonable." Indeed, as it is for such actions as requests, invitations and assessments, so it will likely extend to aspects turn-taking, repair, person reference, the management of epistemic relations and so on. Finally, to suggest this line of thinking is not to claim that negative and positive face considerations directly inform the decision making of interactants (though on occasion they may do). It is rather to observe that the overall patterning of interactional practices is congruent with a face-oriented normative order of social interaction irrespective of the awareness of interactants on any specific occasion.

We are not the first to discuss the relationship between preference organization and face (Holtgraves 1992, Lerner 1996). However, to our knowledge the two stances toward preference represented in the writings of Schegloff and Pomerantz, and the affinity of those stances to considerations of negative and positive face, have not previously been remarked upon. Any invocation of face in relation to interactional data however is shadowed by the question of whether face considerations "explain" conduct. Our position on this matter is convergent with the position developed by Lerner (1996: 319):

> If face-work requires social demonstration to achieve recognition by other, then it is recognizable not by reference to individual desire but by reference to common practices that demonstrate that desire…. The desire to maintain face does not explain the organization of face-work. Rather, the "feelings attached to self and to a self expressed through face" are both acquired and produced as reflexive features or products of recognizable circumstances and courses of action in interaction.

What we know with confidence is that in their management of rejections, refusals, and disagreements, persons conduct themselves in ways that do not involve the impositions and disaffiliations generally associated with negative face (freedom from imposition). Similarly, in such contexts also, persons work to affirm the possibility of agreement, or the desirability of joint future actions, and deploy accounts and appreciations to defeat ascriptions of disregard or relational discord. These practices are recurrently produced in interaction and are indigenous to it. When they are not deployed, their absence is noticeable and accountable and thus they function as part of a self-reproducing system (Heritage and Clayman 2012). And finally, the relational implications of these practices also saturate analytical accounts of preference organization. In all of these respects, we encounter a world in which the issues collected under the rubric of *face* are treated as real-worldly considerations and as a basis for both action and inference.

7. Discussion

Having reviewed the main lines of connection between Goffman's ideas and various initiatives within conversation analysis, we offer a more overarching assessment of Goffman's contribution to a sociology of social interaction. It is now some 40 years since Goffman's passing, and we should acknowledge both the very large scale of development in the CA field in

those years and acknowledge too the extent of the hindsight that now informs this evaluation. How do his legacies stand up four decades on?

First and foremost, it bears emphasis that Goffman's conception of the interaction order, which informed his research throughout his lifetime, was a conceptual innovation of the highest order and one that has proved extraordinarily generative. Goffman's insight, expressed as far back as his dissertation (1953) and in many publications (e.g., Goffman 1955, 1964, 1967, 1983) is that a specifiable normative structure of interaction is the foundation of human social relations, a vehicle for the enactment of social institutions, the means through which psychological and personality characteristics become visible, and above all the means by which identity claims are advanced and socially affirmed (or not).

In a social science field where social structural and psychological forces were viewed as drivers of social behavior, Goffman went 'behind the scenes' to ask about the visibility of these processes not just to social scientists but also to the participants themselves. In the process, he created an 'emic' form of social analysis that was grounded in the orientations of participants. In directing attention to the syntax of social interaction, he created a sociology of social occasions, and correspondingly helped liberate social analysis from the tyranny of chi-squaredom in which, as he put it, "social situations do not have properties and a structure of their own, but merely mark, as it were, the geometric intersection of actors making talk and actors bearing particular social attributes" (Goffman 1964: 134). In his vision, analysis concentrates in the first instance on how actors manifest and recognize attributes in relation to circumstances, rather than treating those attributes as causal variables operating upon a blank canvas. This is a stance that was utterly original when Goffman first adopted it in the 1950s, although the vision underlying this stance would not be fully realized until it was integrated with new methods and with a more

sustained appreciation of the centrality of the management of intersubjectivity in interaction. The groundwork for this integration originated with Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology and developed in an interactional context by Harvey Sacks (1992).

A second key contribution arises from the fact that, as we have noted, Goffman worked out these fundamental ideas in his treatment of face-to-face interaction. In this sociology of occasions, his concentration on engagement, co-presence, and various forms of participation as fundamental to the maintenance of focused interaction, though impressionistic by modern standards, was the central inspiration for the development of what is now known as multimodal analysis (Mondada 2014). This is a very large field of research conducted over numerous social settings, cultures, and languages, and encompassing such notions as haptic interaction (Cekaite and Mondada 2021) and multi-sensoriality, thereby opening the way to the study of the sharing of experience as grounded in social interaction (Goodwin 1997, 2017; Mondada 2021).

Third, is the subterranean yet inescapable role of face considerations as informing and integrating distinct approaches to preference organization. Although face is often considered a distraction from the fundamental sequencing of action in favor of psychological motivations for behavior, we suggest that an integrated view of preference organization cannot be achieved without it. The notions of positive and negative face arise from a diverse array of practices that inform the implementation of sequences. These practices reflexively embody a displayed unwillingness to impede the projects of others, or to show disregard for the persons who instigated those projects. Accordingly, the varying ways of making sense of preference organization found within the CA literature rest upon concepts and specific language that resonate with, while not precisely duplicating, the polarity of negative and positive face. These

latter concepts stand as placeholders for this variegated array of practices and their analysis in the distinctive researches of Emanuel Schegloff and Anita Pomerantz

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