Book Review: Persson, A. (2018). *Framing Social Interaction: Continuities and Cracks in Goffman's Frame Analysis*. (1 ed.) London & New York: Routledge. 188 pages. ISBN: 9781472482587

Persson, A. (2018). Framing Social Interaction: Continuities and Cracks in Goffman's Frame Analysis. (1 ed.) London & New York: Routledge. 188 pages. ISBN: 9781472482587

Maud Mazaniello-Chézol, McGill University, Canada

Framing Social Interaction: Continuities and Cracks in Goffman's Frame Analysis is the second book and one of the numerous analyses of Goffman's sociological work written by Anders Persson[44]. This first edition book is dedicated to the Frame Analysis methodology developed by Goffman during his career that he presented in "Frame Analysis", one of his latest publications in 1974[45]. As a sociologist, Persson's work is largely influenced by Goffman's analytical work on social interactions and its related concepts. This book aims at understanding Goffman's frame perspective through his *oeuvre*[46]. The latter is described as evolving in a meta-perspective, highlighting the overarching concept and method of social interaction analysis and practice. *Framing*, as one of the central elements of this book and Goffman's theories on impression management, face-work and stigma among others, looks at the communicative frame concept of Bateson[47], as well as through James' cognitive concept of frame[48]. Persson's reflection on the frame analysis looks at language as a powerful tool making the interaction vulnerable as directly mentioned in the first part of the book (p.37): language, as an interaction, is regulated by norms and values that differ according to the context. This instability represents opportunities to make mistakes.

To unpack Goffman's Frame Analysis methodology, Persson gives practical examples using his observations of social media and online gaming interactions. In this book, the author also contributes to the debate on whether Goffman's work addresses the question of power and to what extent. Persson elaborates on Frame Analysis as an important input that Goffman's sociology brought indirectly to the concept of power even though he was not seen as a theorist of power (barely using the word power explicitly in his work) and was criticized as having neglected power in his work - something that Persson argued against in the last part of his book.

Persson introduces his book with current examples of disruptions of the *interaction order* as defined by Goffman, namely Trump's allocutions and Dylan's Nobel Prize nomination, to illustrate how these events violated the *etiquette* and the frame people agreed on to make sense of their shared realities. This parallel set up the overall structure of the book, navigating from theory to its application and practice from the individual (micro) to the social (macro) contexts, that intuitively lead the reader to a reflection and understanding of paradigms and concepts that are broadly used in social science methodology, especially in social interaction studies.

---

[44] *Ritualisering och sårbarhet: ansikte mot ansikte med Goffmans perspektiv på social interak*tion. Anders Persson, 2015, Talbok ed. Johanneshov: Myndigheten för tillgängliga medier.

[45] Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.

[46] A complete bibliography of Goffman's writings is available in the book (p. 160)

[47] Bateson, G. (1955). "A theory of play and fantasy; a report on theoretical aspects of the project of study of the role of the paradoxes of abstraction in communication." *Psychiatric research reports*, (2), 39-51.

[48] James, W. (1948). Psychology. Cleveland. *World*.

The book is structured in three parts to address Goffman's frame analysis methodology. Firstly, it starts with (re)situating Goffman's interaction order theory[49], reviewing the key concepts presented in Goffman's literature. In light of this conceptual framework, Persson contextualizes the foundations of frame analysis that emerge early in Goffman's work, namely through the dynamic balance between *ritualization* and *vulnerability* of the interaction that recursively creates a *working consensus* to maintain order.

Secondly, the author proposes a transition into the development of its main argument on frame analysis that he portrays as being a method to analyze social interactions. Distinguishing *frame* and *framing*, the author departs from Goffman's epistemological position[50] to define the *frame* as a social situation or a context identification (p.50) and *framing* as the process individuals implement to try to understand and read each other's situation (p.49). Persson briefly concludes this second part by summarizing his contributions on Goffman's methodology that he deconstructed to give more insight and applicability to it. In doing so, he focused on the construction ('continuities') of frame analysis along Goffman's analytical work since his dissertation in 1953. He also presents the breaches ('cracks') looking at the temporal perspective that is missing in Goffman's frame analysis. The author suggests complementing it by using Koselleck's meta-historical concepts that integrate both a historical frame for the notions of experience and expectation that are present in Goffman's social interaction analysis.

Thirdly, Persson challenges his reading of the frame analysis by applying it to his own work on social media and online interactions. He comes to the conclusion that social media represents a new interaction order comparing face-to-face interactions to persona-to-persona interactions in playing chess and online chess. Breaking down the analysis, Persson offers a discussion on Goffman's controversial contribution on power. The author thus argues that frame analysis also brings insight to power if we are to define it through the influence people have on each other (p.127). By influencing the frame, i.e. the shared realities on a contextualized interaction – or situated activity – one applies their interactive power. To address this argument, Persson contextualizes power through an analytical framework built on the main contributions on power in social science as one of the central concepts, such as Foucault's *discipline*.

The way Persson takes his reader through the book is progressive and intuitive. He starts with a thorough presentation of Goffman's sociological work, embedded in historical and social contexts. He proposes a way to understand and read Goffman's Frame Analysis. Building on a gradual explanation, giving the reader a solid background, he demonstrates how to draw on Goffman's analytical framework to analyze social interaction taking account of a meta-perspective.

Drawing on the substantive analytical work of Goffman since his doctoral dissertation[51], the author allows us to grasp the 'lone ethnographer's' framework by decomposing the scientific viewpoint and analysis methods that made him as controversial as influent in sociology and other related disciplines (e.g., social psychology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, and political science).

---

[49] Goffman, E. (1983). "The interaction order: American Sociological Association, 1982 presidential address." *American sociological review*, *48*(1), 1-17.
[50] Constructivist, even though Goffman himself did not claim it.
[51] Goffman, E. (1959). "The Presentation of Self" in. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.

Book Review: Persson, A. (2018). *Framing Social Interaction: Continuities and Cracks in Goffman's Frame Analysis*. (1 ed.) London & New York: Routledge. 188 pages. ISBN: 9781472482587

His reflection on Goffman's work simplifies the various concepts of this field of inquiry without making them simpler, in alignment with Goffman's so-known writing style and explicit explanations. Focusing on the overall frame analysis that was present throughout Goffman's sociological work, Persson presented frame analysis both as *an object of study* providing readers with empirical avenues to understand how it is embedded in social interactions and apply the method of analysis to shed light to broader perspectives when looking at interactions, and as *a practice* people apply to make sense of shared realities while interacting between each other.

As the book offers a great overview of Goffman's work and how the frame analysis may be used in sociology and other disciplines, students and scholars may find a better understanding of the various concepts proposed by Goffman, and challenge their reading on the frame analysis. Language and Discourse are transversal as they are part of the interactions that shape the social order. In this sense, Persson addresses the symbolism of language and its pivotal place in the analysis. This is also implicitly reflected when discussing Goffman's controversial input on power. Positioning language and discourse as central pieces of social interactions and by extension power relationships, this book also paves the way for other interlinked theories to be further used in the analysis.