




Playing your Life: Impression Management and Strategic Interaction in the game of Bridge

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Goffman: Impression Management



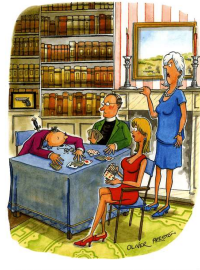
- Everyday Life is a continual performance that we hone through **interactional practice**
- We learn how to **perform** by reading other people's facial expressions/verbal cues/body language
- **Impression Management** refers to a range of techniques we employ to try and manage the **impressions** we give off and that others will have of us.

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Goffman: Strategic Interaction

- **Strategic Interaction** is when Harry is confronted by a series of obstacles (burning bridge/ravenous lion) and needs to **calculate** the most **rational** and **advisable** course of action.
- **Gameworthiness** is the ability to set to set **personal feelings** aside when evaluating a situation and **to think and act under pressure** **without** becoming flustered or verbally aggressive or poking fun at others.




'I never knew Bridge was so dangerous. Last week it was Colonel Mustard in the dining room with the lead piping.'

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Understanding Bridge



Four people sit at a table
Partners play opposite each other


1. Bidding
2. Playing a hand/Dummy
3. Defending
4. Scoring/Winning

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Methods

- Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 52 elite bridge players
- Players have represented their country at various levels and won major national championships.
- None of the bridge players names are anonymised, as they hope the research will be useful to other bridge players
- Interpretive Thematic analysis (Mason, 2017)




MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL... WHO IS THE BEST BRIDGE PLAYER OF THEM ALL?


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Reading People Strategically



'You need to be able to try and put yourself inside the head of your opponent ... just to see what problems he might have. For example, if you're plying a hand, it may be obvious to you what your weakness is, but it doesn't necessarily follow that the defender will be in a position to know what your problem is. And you can play on and if you do things confidently and smoothly enough then they have a difficult guess and can get it wrong!' – Brian Senior

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Defensive Planning

‘The ability to switch from one plan to another relatively quickly, because when you start playing the hand you make a plan and you ... take advantage of the bidding and whatever and then suddenly something unusual happens, like a suit breaks badly and you should be immediately capable of switching your plan and making a completely new [one].’ – Nevena Senior



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Managing Mistakes

‘You have to ... work extremely hard at your game. Particularly since the internet everybody is watching great players ... because it is a game of mistakes, you have to be able to handle mistakes well and that is extremely difficult to explain in an interview ... about how to overcome feeling a sense of humiliation.’ – Simon Gillis



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Supportive Silence

‘What are the key characteristics of a good partner? Keeping your mouth shut when something bad happens at the table and being able to take your ego out and discuss differences.’ – Jill Meyers



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Playing your Life

‘My favourite story is when I was a young player and had a guy who was champion and he has this saying which is funny I think. He said the real bridge player was the guy whose wife just left him, the dog ran away and the flat was flooded and he goes to the tournament and plays, he plays his best, but forgetting. Sitting playing, knowing how to play your life.’ – Artur Malinowski



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