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The Environmental Goffman: Toward an Environmental Sociology of Everyday Life

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While environmental sociology has imported many macro theorists from the larger discipline, it has almost completely ignored Goffman. The primary project of this article is to fill that gap by proposing and initiating a Goffman-esque environmental sociology of everyday life, primarily through Goffman's 1974 work, Frame Analysis. *In doing so we address two issues central to environmentally relevant everyday experience: (1) the commonplace appreciation of "Nature," such as that experienced at parks, on hikes, and being outdoors generally, and (2) the commonsensical notions of "nature" and "naturalness" as used in everyday conduct. In the first task, we make a contribution both to Goffman's frame analytic theory and to environmental sociological theory with our notion of an out-in-nature frame. In the second task, we undertake to identify and formalize for environmental sociology instances implicit in* Frame Analysis *of how notions of nature mask social interests.*

Keywords environmental sociology, everyday life, experience of nature, Goffman, theory

When we take a walk in a park we "appreciate nature." We sense the solid earth beneath our feet. Our eyes rove around the panorama of sunlit emerald foliage that encapsulates us. We easily lend our ears to the lulling gurgle of the brook and eavesdrop on the treetop parley of the birds. We catch a whiff of a nearby cluster of flowers. We muse to ourselves how thoroughly refreshing it is to "get away" from society—out from the many social institutions we feel cramp our style—and "get in touch with nature." Shedding our many worn-and-torn social skins, our worldly demands and occupational stresses dissipate. We feel more natural and at ease and breathe a little easier, a little deeper.

Yet, we could get quite a different feeling. The earth beneath our feet, it occurs to us, is a path that human beings designed. We notice, back behind

the trees, the fence that bounds the park. Now, too, we recall that this brook is quite polluted. The fragrance of the flowers, at least, is still with us, but we quickly concede that these flowers aren't native to this region. Indeed, some have traversed oceans as economic cargo, a local instance of global trade. We find ourselves curious about the portion of local tax dollars required in maintaining the park. We even find ourselves absorbed now in thoughts about the city planners who ''put'' the park here and wonder whether there was any political debate over it when it was first proposed. We no longer feel quite as natural as we did and it dawns on us (perhaps with mild annoyance) that we are still very much in the realm of social institutions from which moments earlier we were enjoying a bit of a breather.

With no change of scenery, why the dramatic change in effect? Our aim in this article is to develop an environmental sociological theory that, in part, can account for just such an everyday experience as a walk in a park and, indeed, that would take an interest in just such an ordinary experience in the first place: in sum, an environmental sociology of everyday life.

But in particular, a frame analytic one. Our inspiration came by way of Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974), whose concept of ''natural frames'' intrigued us as environmental sociologists. It is as environmental sociologists that we approach key components of *Frame Analysis*, extending it in ways we see relevant for an environmental sociology of everyday life. Our project is to create an Environmental Goffman—shorthand for a Goffmanesque frame analytic environmental sociology of everyday life. We employ the adjective ''Goffmanesque,'' common in the literature on Goffman, to distinguish our specifically Goffman-centric frame analytic from other uses of the trope of ''frames'' that draw little on Goffman, such as the frame perspective in social movement theory with its focus on ideology, mass media, and collective power struggles, which we would argue bears little resemblance to Goffman's commitment to the episodic character and routine features of everyday social life. To avoid this outcome, we try to stay true to the spirit of the commonplace so exemplary throughout all Goffman's work, though *Frame Analysis* takes precedent as the fulcrum of our endeavor.

An adequate theoretical start for an environmental sociology of everyday life would, seemingly by definition, necessarily address and shed light on two items of environmentally relevant everyday experience. The first is the *commonplace appreciation of nature*, such as we experience in parks, on nature walks, and at certain moments during outdoor leisure, recreation, or travel (including outdoor bipedal locomotion between indoor departures and destinations). The second regards the *commonsensical notions of nature*, specifically the role of their presence and use in everyday conduct. On the first point, we explain and develop Goffman's concept of natural frames and make a unique contribution both to his frame analysis and to environmental sociology by advancing an *out-in-nature frame* and charting its accompanying self-effects. On the second point, we formalize instances in *Frame Analysis* of how notions of nature and naturalness are routinely encountered and used in daily forms of conduct in light of their potential to mask social interests. Finally, we ponder (and offer some answers to) the question of why environmental sociology has ignored Goffman, the most widely known, widely read, widely appreciated, and widely cited sociological theorist of everyday life. We begin, however, by clarifying Goffman's notion of frames.

Frames and Interests

"What is it that's going on here?" This question is the very crux—the genesis as well as the genius—of Goffman's frame analysis. It is the distinctive starting point of any Goffmanesque frame analytic.

> When individuals attend to any current situation, they face the question: "What is it that's going on here?" Whether asked explicitly, as in times of confusion and doubt, or tacitly, during occasions of usual certitude, the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way the individuals then proceed to get on with the affairs at hand. (Goffman 1974, 8)

Frames, then, are interpretative perspectives—some "neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates, and rules," while others appear "to have no apparent articulated shape, providing only a lore of understanding" (Goffman 1974, 21)—that help us answer the pressing pragmatic question upon entering any situation: "What is it that's going on here?"

One means by which we get an angle on "what's going on here" is to gauge the interests of the party or parties with whom we're interacting. We may, in effect, ask, "What interests may be motivating their actions?" and "What response might their actions be seeking to elicit from me?" We may also be suspicious that those present in our current stream of social engagement are not themselves particularly "interested," but are pawn and patsy to the interests of some non-present third party.

Goffman seldom deals explicitly with interests in *Frame Analysis* and his few theoretical statements only acknowledge that the individual will interpret what's going on through his or her own interests. Surely, however, the individual's assessment—correct, incorrect, or inconclusive—of the interests of the other parties involved is no less consequential. Indeed, Goffman's own anecdotal illustrations littered throughout *Frame Analysis* betray this theoretical shortsightedness, as what they so often delectably illustrate is the large role played by the concealment of interests and all the drama of deception and suspicion that follows from that and for which Goffman's whole body of work is so famous.

But Goffman is also famous for *not* being a "systematic" theoretician. His fame, perhaps like Simmel's, to whom he is often compared, is as a descriptive theoretician of the episodic. While *Frame Analysis* has been seen as Goffman's effort to remove himself from Simmel's fate and win recognition for a massive systematic and explanatory treatise (Berger 1986), the fact that interests receive much more their due from Goffman's illustrations than from his theoretical formulations should not be a surprise to any honest respecter of Goffman's genius.

Central to both *Frame Analysis* itself and our unearthing of interests from their implicit treatment therein is the concept of *primary frames*. Goffman (1974, 21) defined a primary frame as one that renders "what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful." These consist of two basic types: *social frames*, which deal with "guided doings," and, significantly for our purposes, *natural frames*, which are intended to account for "natural" or "unguided events" (Goffman 1974, 21–22). As Goffman (1974, 24) put it: "When the sun comes up, a natural event; when the blind is pulled down in order to avoid what has come up, a guided doing." Goffman's sociology is founded on the everyday distinction between guided and unguided happenings (Goffman 1959; 1974).

Natural frames "identify occurrences seen as undirected, unoriented, unanimated, unguided, 'purely physical'" (Goffman 1974, 22). As such, natural frames logically exclude social responsibility or, overlapping with social frames, reduce responsibility and mitigate social sanctions (Goffman 1974). By contrast, social frames account for "events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence" and "subject the doer to 'standards,' to social appraisal of his action based on its honesty, efficiency, economy, safety, elegance, tactfulness, good taste, and so forth" (Goffman 1974, 22).

With primary frames, Goffman had captured a first principle in everyday judgmental work—something that must be tentatively decided upon before any further distinctions can be drawn in deciding just what it is that is going on. As Goffman (1974, 303–305) stated:

> First there are ambiguities regarding primary frameworks. Hearing something at the door, the individual for a moment may not know whether a purely natural event is involved, say, the brushing of a branch against the door by the wind, or a social one, namely, a knock. ... [T]hese ambiguities have to be resolved, lest the individual be forced to remain in doubt about the entire nature of the happenings around him.

We return to framing ambiguities later. Our point here is that the social–natural distinction is the "primary" one in everyday judgment, having consequences for any and all judgmental work that follows. Typologically, Goffman admittedly neglected to go much beyond this primary distinction, failing to indicate "the range of possible primary frameworks" (Manning 1992, 132). But for natural frames the problem is compounded by Goffman's asymmetrical treatment. Having introduced the distinction early on in his exposition, he then largely set natural frames aside for the remainder of the work, pursuing the social almost entirely. In the following section, we note natural frameworks that Goffman in passing identified and make our own contribution to frame analytic theory in general and environmental sociology in particular by outlining an out-in-nature frame.

Natural Frames and the Out-In-Nature Frame

Goffman did not posit a monolithic natural frame. Rather, he used the plural, "natural frameworks" (Goffman 1974, 22), calling attention to some familiar ones, such as the "physical-medical frame" (Goffman 1974, 116), and noting that "elegant versions" of natural frames can be found throughout "the physical and biological sciences" (Goffman 1974, 22). One could think, for example, of a Newtonian frame, a Darwinian or evolutionary frame, an ecosystem frame, a climatic or meteorological frame, a geological frame, and so forth. Indeed, some of these, while unspecified, are clearly evident in Goffman's discussions. Another natural frame that Goffman seemed to enjoy giving some irony-tinged attention to is the psychoanalytic frame. Concerned with the subconscious dimensions of guided actions, this frame encourages seeing past the explicitly stated conscious intentions of an actor to "discover" the "real," unguided storyline in their behavior patterns.

These are, however, natural frames that leave out the notion of—and, importantly, feeling for[1]—the kind of nature we tend to signify with a capital N. Goffman

gave no indication of arguably the most common natural frame in daily experience. Recalling again our experience at the park, how are we to understand the production of this rather common experience of being "out in nature"? No natural frame identified by Goffman answers these questions—a somewhat peculiar absence, considering Goffman's abiding interest in everyday experiences and public places. We, therefore, propose the existence of an *out-in-nature frame*.

The out-in-nature frame is one with which we find a particular refuge from society, allowing us to loosen the social entanglements felt to impinge upon us at times. With the out-in-nature frame, we feel we are "away from it all"—unencumbered by the expectations, evaluations, and the often hurried pace of everyday social life. Here there is a refreshing break from anxiety over outcome, as "success or failure in regard to these events is not imaginable" (Goffman 1974, 22, on natural frames generally). Here there is no immediate behavioral or verbal accountability to others (e.g., relations, authorities, acquaintances, strangers), for with natural happenings "no negative or positive sanctions are involved" (Goffman 1974, 22).

Experientially speaking, being out-in-nature is to be out from under society's oppressive scrutiny,[2] delivered from the labor of impression management and deference and demeanor work. Thus, here we sense a respite from, as Goffman (1974, 22) aptly put it, our "serial management of consequentiality." Complexities of social life feel more remote, having fallen prey to welcomed forgetfulness. This psychological distance, together with the "objectivity" connoted by "Nature,"[3] provides an isle of detachment and security from the whirling currents of social life. The therapeutic value of the out-in-nature frame should be apparent to anyone who has ever felt over-extended by social obligations—even those we take much joy in—and found solace "out in nature." Kant (1987, 166) spoke to just such a situation: "A man who has taste enough to judge the products of fine art with the greatest correctness and refinement may still be glad to leave a room in which he finds those beauties that minister to vanity and perhaps to social joys, and to turn instead to the beautiful in nature."

The "out" in the "out-in-nature frame" is a defining feature of the experiential product of the so-framed situation. Adorno (1997, 63) characterized the experience as a "gesture of stepping out into the open." As such, this "out" also points to a significant restriction: It is nearly impossible to have an out-in-nature experience when we are *in* an office building, a military barracks, a hospital, a shopping mall, and so on. Generally, when we try, we illustrate to ourselves that we are not living in a world that permits an "anything goes" social constructionism.

At the same time, when we're "out in nature," we're not passively "taking in nature," but have framed our environment for a distinct and valued outcome: an "out-in-nature" experience. The out-in-nature frame brings to our attention certain features of our activity and our environment, putting other features *out of frame*. Recall again the illustration of the park experience. Certain matters in plain view, while not ignored in a crude way, are nevertheless kept out of frame: the fence, the built footpath, and so on. Thus, certain perfectly understandable considerations that might follow from such recognitions are kept from arising, like the political and economic issues of the park. As Katz and Kirby (1991, 267) noted, even "the selection of appropriate sites for parks very often involve ruling class projects, some harsh, some reform-oriented: slum clearance, the removal of ad hoc shanty towns, the formalization of exclusionary land use practices, temperance, the provision of recreational facilities, working class education." The out-in-nature frame is what accounts for seeing and experiencing the park as a breather from society, rather than

as society or as yet *another part* or *aspect* of society, creating a psychological space from social institutions by identifying instead with ''Nature.''

Framing the scene with the out-in-nature frame brings to the foreground unguidedness, while signs of guidedness ebb from our immediate attention. But this framing effect applies not only to ''the environment,'' but also to ''the self,'' as both are fully implicated in the framing, a fact Goffman (1959, 242) clearly recognized (albeit in a face-to-face context) when he wrote, ''When an individual appears before others, he knowingly and unwittingly projects a definition of the situation, of which a conception of himself is an important part.'' Thus, switching frames modifies what's in frame and what's out of frame, producing not only a change of experience, but a change of the experiencer, of identity. On a ''nature walk,'' we experience ourselves quite differently than if we were walking to get to an appointment on time to spare ourselves the embarrassment of being late (hurrying), to lose weight so others might find us more attractive or improve our health (power walking), to express with others our political opposition to social injustices (protest marching), or as a means of coping with anxiety (pacing). Out-in-nature framing not only shapes how we behave and experience our strip of activity (a ''nature walk''), but also, in turn, who we feel ourselves to be (our more ''natural self''). Feeling ''out'' from ''society'' and feeling an affinity with unguided ''Nature,'' one's own unguidedness is accentuated and the particular self-feeling imparted is therefore likely to be characterized as more carefree or spontaneous, implying feeling more simple, authentic, uncontrived—in a word, more ''natural.''

Within the Meadian social psychological tradition, Bell (1994) has distinguished between the *natural other*—the sense of a realm free from the pollution of social interests—and, as corollary to this, a *natural me*—a sense of a truer, more authentic self. Bell argued that we use this sense of an interest-free realm as a kind of moral refuge from the sense of self we derive from social life. But whereas Mead presumed that the ''generalized other'' and ''me'' were taken onboard the self unproblematically and largely without conscious recognition of their social origins, Bell argued that the recognition of the presence of society in the mind is common in social life and that with it comes the equally common recognition of the potential that social interests lie behind them. This recognition can create significant moral and motivational trouble for the self, and experience of an alternative realm beyond the social is a common basis by which people seek some form of re-grounding and even defense.

Though Goffman and Mead began from different theoretical premises and concerns and proceeded along equally original conceptual lines, our Goffmanian natural self presented here and Bell's (1994) Meadian ''natural me'' are virtually interchangeable concepts in and of themselves. In both, the natural self is seen as the product of a particular conception of and feeling for the natural environment as a refuge from society, providing a basis for decompression, regrounding, and defense.

Unlike Mead himself, however, Goffman was keenly interested in the problematics of everyday encounters with others (not quite a Sartrean ''Hell,'' though certainly Goffman highlighted, shall we say by way of comparison, a lot of the ''heck'' of dealing with others) and various means for attaining a degree of distance and freedom from society. It was this desire for distance and freedom that Goffman was eager to catch in action, from the defiant and dignifying role-distance in carrying out otherwise thankless tasks to the very lack of totality achieved by total institutions. This is the desire present when we, in effect, say: ''Whatever my relative, socially constructed, functionally necessary self is, the 'real me' is...'' And: ''Regardless of

how 'society' sees and judges me, the 'real me' is . . ." For, as Goffman (1997[1961], 39) noted, individuals use "whatever means are at hand to introduce a margin of free-dom and maneuverability, of pointed disidentification." Again, Goffman (1997[1961], 39–40) depicted it this way: "The individual acts [as if] to say: 'I do not dispute the direction in which things are going and I will go along with them, but at the same time I want you to know that you haven't fully contained me in the state of affairs.'"

Whether compelled by ontological doubt, as some of our social constructionists suggest, or fueled by romantic disdain, as certain artists have been wont to exemplify, we generally turn to some kind of Nature to "discover" a "ground of being" more "deep," "real," and "true" than this distracted, well-intentioned, yet invariably deceitful surface self. This ontological bolstering provides leverage against society's impositions, the judgments of others, and the social contingencies and self-doubts that assail us. As Berger and Luckmann (1966, 99–100) put it:

> The individual passing from one biographical phase to another can view himself as repeating a sequence that is given in the "nature of things," or in his own "nature." [. . .] The individual may thus "know who he is" by anchoring his identity in a cosmic reality protected from both the contin-gencies of socialization and the malevolent self-transformations of marginal experiences. Even if his neighbors do not know who he is, and even if he himself may forget in the throes of nightmare, he can reassure himself that his "true self" is an ultimately real entity in an ultimately real universe.

Likewise, "contact with Nature" mitigates feeling too socially immersed, too turned into mere social functionaries, centering our sense of self in something considered more metaphysically profound than what our day-in day-out lives empirically con-sist of—the summoning of the telephone to be answered, the dishes to be done, the line to stand in, the idle pleasantries to be exchanged, and so on, ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

Natural Frames as Vehicles for Social Interests

In *Frame Analysis*, nonresponsibility appears as the quintessential feature of natural frames (Goffman 1974). Whatever strip of activity is framed as natural sidesteps the full force of social accountability and blame. It is the ascription of responsibility that is "central" to the "primary" distinction between natural and social frames:

> A central difference between natural and social frameworks is the role accorded to actors, specifically individuals. In the case of natural perspec-tives, individuals have no special status, being subject to the same deter-ministic, will-less, nonmoral ways of being as any other part of the scene. In the case of social frameworks, individuals figure differently. They are defined as self-determined agencies, legally competent to act and morally responsible for doing so properly. (Goffman 1974, 188)

Of course, in daily life one is not always applied to the exclusion of the other. As only partially socialized agents, young children are partially treated within a natural framework and thus are not held fully accountable for their actions. The same is true

of adults in certain situations: "There are occasions when we anticipate treating an individual within a social framework but find that he is perceivedly disqualified, or partly so, thus inducing the application of a natural perspective" (Goffman 1974, 188). In light of the potential immunity, actors may strategically behave so as to circumvent the strictures of responsibility by "obliging others to suppress social frameworks and allow a purely naturalistic reading" (Goffman 1974, 192). In such ways, "action can be styled to carry its own excuse in advance of an actual call of it" (Goffman 1974, 332). Thus, it may often serve one's interests to manage one's affairs (guided doings) in such a way as to incline, induce, or oblige others to at least a partial natural framing of those affairs.

Complicating judgmental work further are epistemological gray areas that also result in framing ambiguities. As a classic case in point, Goffman (1974, 189) noted the "cosmological difficulties" involved in the way we treat mental disorder:

> Put simply, at one extreme, say the organic brain defects, there is wide agreement that it would be wrong to apply a social framework involving the imputation of fully qualified actor status; and at the other extreme, perhaps the mild psychoneurosis, so-called, there might be fairly wide agreement that ordinary social standards could be applied. However, the many cases in between lead to considerable differences of opinion. Moreover, the same person viewing the same dubious actor will not be consistent and will not restrict himself to a natural or to a social perspective.

Such framing ambiguity can be exploited—for example, in the latitude with which we give a strip of activity in a gray area "the benefit of the doubt" as to it being natural, whether out of consideration for the other or pragmatically as a default position for getting on with our own affairs. Thus, in various ways and degrees, natural frames are available as social resources to avoid, suspend, or mitigate censure and reconfigure the distribution of blame.

A pervasive feature of everyday life is the expectation that people's behavior will be sensible and accountable in its course and, upon any occasion when not readily sensible and accountable in its course, some explanation—an accommodation of sorts to the common sense and common sensibilities that have been disturbed—will be due. Upon this universal feature of everyday life, we introduce three concepts— natural routinizations, natural justifications, and natural fabrications—more suited to our concerns here.

By *natural routinization* we mean certain types of guided doings are always already understood, and thus justified, as "natural behavior" for certain "natural categories" of people and contexts, thus tacitly according or denying large blocks of activities to them. Accordingly, natural routinization is categorical and taken for granted. It is "given" *in* the order of things and *as* the order of things. It is what-everybody-knows-to-be-natural, such as a "natural" ability or the occurrence of an earthquake, in regard to a certain type of actor or situation. As such, natural routi-nizations transpire largely out of frame—and, thus, unproblematically—allowing interests to be protected under the umbrella of "the natural" by default.

By contrast, we suggest that justifications are case by case, largely being considered a "special case"—for example, invoking "extenuating circumstances"— as individual agents who upset expected regularities or standards feel that they are (or actually are) called upon to explicitly explain themselves to others. *Natural*

justifications, then, are simply those justifications that appeal to ''nature'' for their explanatory remedy. These are more manifestly controversial, typically, for they seek to answer a question that has been raised, rather than natural routinization in which the question never occurs. For example, in response to a building that fell when another stood when an earthquake struck, the builder of the fallen building might be accused of shoddy construction, raising the issue of social interests and shattering the natural frame of the earthquake. The builder might respond, though, that the soil conditions were better under the building that stood, returning the earthquake to the natural frame via this justification—and perhaps with every conviction and no intent to deceive the listener any more than to deceive himself or herself.

Another way the social can be screened from attention is to fabricate an entire scene as an unguided ''natural'' one. These are ''material designs'' and ''social fabrications'' of the natural, or what we will term *natural fabrications* in which there is a deliberate attempt at making a contrived event or environment appear natural, to manage a scene so that the guided doings that go into the material and social construction of ''natural'' or ''authentic'' experience are kept ''backstage.'' Goffman (1974, 86) provided an illustration of such fabrication: ''Indeed, even what a safari gets to see of the jungle can be fabricated—as when a hunting guide arranges to have a pride of lions learn to look for food at a particular place (on hearing a whistle pitched higher than man can hear), and then, after a two week buildup through the forest with his party, bagging everything but lions by good woodsmanship, brings them to the point where a lion kill will assuredly occur, leaving this clients deeply satisfied with what they have been able to wrest from an alien and antagonistic world of raw nature.''

Whether routinized, justified, or fabricated, then, the ''natural'' is a *social* resource in everyday interaction.

Natural Frames and the Reality of Nature

But is all nature fake, therefore? It should be noted Goffman wasn't interested in reality per se and, thus, all debates about it were bracketed from his concern, as were all historical discussions of the origins of the phenomena he described. Many others (e.g., Cronon 1996; Fall 2002) have done a fabulous job in drawing out the historical roots of our naive ideas of nature and naturalness, in part to expose their assumptions and contradictions. There is effectively a whole academic industry in this regard. For our distinctly Goffmanesque project, we necessarily adopt Goffman's particular analytic purchase on the everyday and thus likewise adopt his concerns and procedure, with both the bounty and limitations they entail. Regarding the ''naivety'' of people's out-in-nature frame as one everyday conception and experience of nature, it would be the easiest thing in the world to punch holes in it, to ''expose'' its naivety. But the purpose of a distinctly Goffmanian analysis is not to debunk it, but to describe it.

In this we see potential for applying Goffman to concrete problems of natural resource management and, as it used to be called, nature appreciation. Routinization, justification, and fabrication need not be exploitive per se, even though they harbor social interests. For example, Goffman (1974, 87) discussed various types of ''*benign* fabrications.'' A desire for the ''authentic'' or ''natural'' can combine with differential understanding of some ''natural'' setting to contribute to actors being ''contained'' in a benign fabrication of a ''natural'' scene.

As Hull et al. (2001, 331) found, when it comes to forest management practices, "most people don't know how to evaluate forest health other than using vague assumptions that big, green trees are good and exposed soil is bad." Magill's (1994) study of perceptions of managed landscapes found that "apparently people prefer seeing landscapes that support trees or some other type of vegetation" (14). Part of the implied or explicit remedy to such understandings and perceptions is for natural resource management to *screen with green*: "The positive reaction among respondents in this study toward the green of vegetation tells managers that the sooner a landscape disturbance reverts to green the less likely it will be regarded with disfavor" (Magill 1994, 15).

It is important to note that the point of Goffman's category of benign fabrications is not that the fabrication is indeed benign, but rather that it is understood to be benign. Of course, there is much potential for abuse here. Magill (1994, 15) perhaps invites this abuse when he advises that "anything that might accelerate the process [of greening], such as replanting immediately or fertilizing to accelerate growth, may shorten the duration of public criticism that can arise from the negative visual impacts of timber cuttings, road cuts and fills [etc.]." Moreover, such screen-with-green management strategies are, for good or ill, inevitably tinged with paternalism. Goffman (1974, 99) defined such paternalistic deceits and fabrications as those that are "performed in what is felt to be the dupe's best interest, but which he might reject, at least at the beginning, were he to discover what was really happening. The falsity is calculated to give him comfort and render him tractable and is constructed for those reasons." The *social production* of "the natural," the *staging* of the unguided, is one critical means by which an actor is "contained" in a fabricated "natural" scene, duping him or her about "the real goings-on" behind scenes of green, so to speak—perhaps to his or her detriment.

And perhaps to his or her advantage. Studies of green exercise and green care find that natural framing can have positive mental and physical health outcomes, in line with the therapeutic value of the out-in-nature frame that we discussed earlier, which one experiences as a refuge from the entanglements and interests of social life. For example, Ulrich (1984) in a 10-year study found that merely having a hospital room with a view of trees improved rates of postoperative recovery. Pretty et al. (2007) found that green exercise outdoors in putatively natural settings elevates mood and other elements of mental health status. In an earlier study, Pretty et al. (2005) found that merely projecting pleasant scenes, including green rural scenes, on the wall in front of exercisers on a treadmill improved their mental health status beyond the effect of the exercise itself. Here the benign fabrication was known to all parties involved, and indeed could not have been hidden, as the exercisers were well aware that what they saw in front of them were only images.

The trend has been to deconstruct the Nature concept. We do not reject such studies. But what our Goffmanian analysis brings to the table is to make its more typical, commonplace, and naive deployment and operation a phenomenon worthy of analytical treatment in its own right. By better understanding the social organization of nature as it pertains to everyday life we might even, warily, make it better.

Discussion and Conclusion

Encounters with nature and its myriad framings are a regular feature of everyday life. And yet, while the theories of many classical sociologists have been incorporated

within environmental sociology (Buttel 2002) and while environmental sociology has experienced its own cultural turn (Buttel et al. 2002; Buttel 1996), the appearance of Goffman in the literature of environmental sociology is next to nonexistent.[4] Perhaps this absence has to do with Goffman's focus on the interaction order.

Although Goffman (1997[1983], 236–237), who had something of the ethologist in him, noted that "the interaction order catches humans in just that angle of their existence that displays considerable overlap with the social life of other species," nevertheless, for full social scientific appreciation of the interaction order itself—that is, "as a substantive domain in its own right"—Goffman in effect bracketed essences. Recognizing that in everyday life the "true" or "real" goings-on in the individual "can be ascertained only indirectly" (Goffman 1959, 2), Goffman only concerned himself with such "true" or "real" inner realities as interactional inferences and attributions—and these in response to nothing more epistemologically bankable than interactional displays.

> Whatever a participant "really is," is not really the issue. His fellow participants are not likely to discover this if indeed it is discoverable. What is important is the sense he provides them through this dealings with them of what sort of person he is behind the role he is in. (Goffman 1974, 298)

With essences bracketed from analytic attention, the self becomes *empirically available* as "a product of a scene" rather than "a cause of it" (Goffman 1959, 252). It consequently belongs neither to any *naturalistic view*, as the self is "not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die," nor to any *abstract naturalism*, as a self-beyond-all-appearances (i.e., any deep, essential self) is vacuous, merely a "peg" upon which presentations are hung and stigmas attached (Goffman 1959, 252–253). Thus, it is not entirely surprising that Goffman's social physics of surface (Tseelon 1992), with its interactional ontology and radically sociological standpoint, did not capture the attention, much less the imagination, of environmental sociology.

But perhaps Goffman's absence from environmental sociology also has something to do with environmental sociology, too. Early on, environmental sociology largely assumed the agency–structure divide common in sociological theory. As Buttel (1996) depicted it, on the one side are *macrostructural theories* of ordinary practices that have largely unrecognized or under-recognized environmental impacts. This approach deals with substructurally environmental phenomena and tends toward the deterministic. On the other side are *activism-movement theories* of intentional practices for purposeful environmental impacts. This approach takes an interest in explicitly environmental social action and is typically agentic. But, as Rawls (1987, 139) has noted, "it is difficult to comprehend Goffman within such a framework" because "Goffman doesn't begin in the familiar fashion with individual agents and social structures which they must either conform to or resist. Rather he begins with those settings, commitments, and understandings which allow agents and social structures to have a social presence in the first place." The point is a structural as much as an intellectual one: Goffmanian sociology has found little place in environmental sociology thus far because it fit neither of the two traditional domains of theory, research, and funding in environmental sociology. From this view, it is not entirely surprising that environmental sociology, with its two-party hegemony and its bravado for tackling matters of "great importance" (macro-structural) and "great

impact'' (agency-movement), did not think to concern itself with the mundane and seemingly inconsequential.

Our approach stands in contrast to such tendencies to dismiss daily life experience—tendencies to consider a ''nature walk,'' contrary to experience, as an inconsequential phenomenon. We here presented an environmental sociology that would dare to make problematic something so simple and restful as ''enjoying nature''—thereby, so it would seem, risking the annihilation of that very enjoyment by our restless desire to understand it. Fortunately, environmental sociology is changing greatly; space continues to open up for approaches that go beyond the longstanding dichotomy. Here, in our effort to forge an environmental sociology of everyday life, and in particular a decidedly Goffmanesque one, our phenomenon was neither intentional activism exactly, nor macro structures as such. Rather, it was the social organization of the experience of nature and of naturalness such as are felt to be generally familiar in our everyday experiences of readily recognizable situations. Thus, holding the same methodological footing as Goffman, we enjoy the same methodological advantage, sidestepping the usual dichotomies that had long dominated sociology and were imported uncritically into environmental sociology even as sociology itself was raising a stink about them.

Our effort here has been to forge clearer beginnings for a new domain in environmental sociology: an environmental sociology of everyday life. We hope our article will not only encourage other environmental sociologists to work along a Goffmanesque tack, but also will be an inviting call for opening up this arena of scholarship. There's been a vague sense of it in a paper trail of scattered works. Now it has a name. Let's start the dialogue.

Notes

1. Goffman appears drawn to those natural frames that evoke some form of emotional detachment—that is, scientific, psychiatric, medical—rather than attachment. This, too, is yet another one-sidedness in Goffman's account of natural frames that we redress.
2. One can think here of Foucault's (1995) ''*surveiller*'': the disciplining surveillance operations characterizing modern society. Equally, one can think of Mead's (1934) ''generalized other'' and Cooley's (1998) ''looking-glass self'': seeing and evaluating ourselves as we imagine other individuals and groups do. The oppressive watchfulness of Freud's (1961, 70–71, 83) super-ego, too, comes to mind: Civilization sets up ''an agency within'' the individual (''like a garrison in a conquered city'') ''to watch over'' the ''actions and intentions of the ego,'' judging them, as ''the harshness of the super-ego'' is identical to ''the perception which the ego has of being watched over in this way.''
3. As van Koppen (2000, 314) noted, ''nature manifests itself as being there objectively, that is, independent of the subject's consciousness and will.''
4. For an exception, see Bell's 1997 article on the experience of social ''ghosts'' in the material world.

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