**Introduction to Social Interaction**

Face-to-face interaction of even the simplest sort is a far more socially intricate operation than we generally recognize. It is rife with unacknowledged rituals, tacit understandings, covert symbolic exchanges, impression management techniques, and calculated strategic maneuverings.

The Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman went to the Shetland Islands in the 1950s to do fieldwork on the social structure of the island community for his PhD dissertation. However, he found that the complex interpersonal relationships in the hotel he stayed at to be a much richer site for social study. The theories that became the basis for his dramaturgical approach in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959) developed from his detailed observations of the elaborate “interaction rituals” in everyday social interaction.