Accounts of Conduct in Interaction

Interruption, Overlap, and Turn-Taking

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INTRODUCTION

The opening sentences of Max Weber's (1978, p. 4) *Economy and Society*, it may be recalled, read as follows:

> Sociology ... is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of "action" insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior—be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.

Weber illustrated the point of these discriminations by the case of two cyclists who might be imagined as approaching an intersection at right angles to one another with a building blocking mutual visual access. The collision which results, Weber said, was not a "social action" in the sense he was concerned to establish, though the aftermath of recriminations which followed it almost certainly were. What Weber (1978, p. 23) wrote was:

> Not every type of contact of human beings has a social character; this is rather confined to cases where the actor's behavior is meaningfully oriented to that of others. For example, a mere collision of two cyclists may be compared to a natural event. On the other hand, their attempt to avoid hitting each other, or whatever insults, blows, or friendly discussion might follow the collision, would constitute "social action."

For all practical purposes, that is the last we hear of social action at that primordial level of direct interaction between societal members in *Economy and Society*; thereafter, the focus shifts to bureaucracy, legitimation formulae, administrative staffs, systems of law, rational foundations of music, religious worldviews, patriachalism and patrimonialism, political and hierocratic domination, the city, and the like. What happened to the two cyclists?

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A moment's reflection suggests that, if indeed "sociology ... is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action," and "action is 'social' insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber, 1978, p. 4) then the discipline should be sustainedly preoccupied with settings on a scale at which analysts can address actors engaged in action which "takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (p. 4). Direct interaction between persons is the most obvious site for such inquiry, as Weber's own example suggests.

So why did Weber not pursue it? Perhaps it involved (in addition to his own prior preparation, commitments, and scholarship, which led in other directions) his recognition that serious work along such lines could not survive for long and thrive by *imagining* how people conduct themselves, or by relying on consensually stipulated recollections of scenes one had observed casually or been party to oneself. These days, however, the development of technology has made it possible to record many such scenes of interaction and to document at a level of detail that Weber might well not have imagined how a participant's action "takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (p. 4). The literature of conversation analysis (CA) is full of such demonstrations.

Consider, for example, Goodwin's (1979) analysis of the production of a single sentence at the dinner table. John begins to announce that he has stopped smoking, but as his gaze traverses the table, he finds neither of the two adults who are the dinner guests looking at him and thereby embodying themselves as aligned recipients of his talk. His wife *is* so aligned, but for her it is not news that he has stopped smoking and therefore that is not an appropriate "sayable." John then modifies his utterance in the course of its production by adding "one week ago today, actually," making the turn into the sort of utterance (registering an "anniversary") that might be news, and thus properly sayable, to the only person present who is an aligned recipient for it. Goodwin's analysis is considerably more detailed than this and is grounded in repeatably observable videotape of the scene, in which can be tracked moment by moment where John is gazing, what he sees, what the import is for his utterance-to-that-point, how the utterance is changed "on the fly," where he looks next, what he sees, and so on. Surely this is an exemplification precisely of Weber's (1978) proposed focus on action which "takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (p. 4). The topic of the present chapter—"interruption"—offers another exemplification even more resonant with Weber's own anecdotal example.

The empirical arena examined here takes Weber's illustration of the collision of bicycle riders, extracts its key formal and defining feature—the circumstance of more than one person trying to occupy a "position" that can accommodate only one—and pursues its study in a setting where it is vastly recurrent, structurally endemic, and potentially profoundly consequential because the setting is one through which all the institutions of society get much of their work done, namely, talk-in-interaction and especially conversation, which I take to be the primordial site of sociality. This is an arena and a phenomenon within it that has been explored by social scientists working within mainstream paradigms as a strategic site in which to investigate the operation in interaction of features of larger-scale social organization such as power, status, hierarchy, gender, and the like, often in experimental or quasi-experimental investigations (see the following section). For such interests, what is promised is an account of an interactional mechanism by which the effects otherwise represented by conceptual linkages or statistical associations might observably be produced by the participants, and this outcome exemplifies a more general implication for accounts of actual conduct in sociological and other social scientific research enterprises. But his promise is best reserved for the end of the chapter, after its substance has been explicated.

INTERRUPTION

"Interruption," often considered part of the relatively superficial species of normative regulation and violation we term "etiquette," was moved into a position of greater seriousness by the initiative taken by West and Zimmerman in the mid-to-late 1970s (West, 1979; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Zimmerman & West, 1975). In an effort to bring the resources of conversation analysis to bear on topics of greater visibility and already established concern to a broader audience, they undertook a series of studies examining interruption in the context of dyadic interactions of varying gender composition, an initiative of interest to a broad sociological and social scientific constituency, not to mention a feminist one, and a more general, extra-academic one (as witnessed by coverage in the popular magazine *Psychology Today*). The upshot taken from this work can be put most roughly as, "men interrupt women much more than women interrupt men."

In the years that followed (the mid-to-late 1980s), this line of inquiry and its results engendered (if I may put it that way) a range of contrary stances and reported findings (e.g., the series of publications by Murray and his colleagues, inter alia; cf. Murray, 1985, 1988; Murray & Covelli, 1988). The upshot of many of these reports, largely in the context of preoccupations with gender relations, whether from a feminist point of view or other, can be put most roughly as "No they don't," and/or "That's not the way to look at it, study it, interpret it, etc."

At the same time, other investigators extended the effort to relate interruption to aspects of social structure and social organization in other directions. For example, taking interruption as an indicator and instrument of hierarchy and dominance relationships, they deployed it in studies of small groups of various sorts to explore such topics as whether dominance relationships were fundamentally grounded in gender categories or whether gender was itself simply (or not so simply) an index of or proxy for status and power relationships (e.g., Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1985; Smith-Loven & Brody, 1989, inter alia). The upshot taken from this work can be put most roughly as, "It depends." The upshot of a review of this entire domain of literature and its variants in the mid-1990s (James & Clarke, 1993) roughly can be characterized as "indeterminate," that is, that few conclusions can be said to be supported other than that men do not interrupt more and that not all interruptions are disruptive or dominating. This chapter undertakes to revisit the topic of "interruption" under conversation-analytic and ethnomethodological auspices,[1] to clarify how interruption figures in a technical account of conversational interaction, and to reconsider and (re-)assess its status as an analytic tool for more traditional and mainstream sociological concerns.[2]

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[1]At the time this line of work was being launched, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, although already somewhat drifting apart, were rather more kindred undertakings than they have since become. Furthermore, some recent publications (e.g., Lynch, 1993) have characterized the work of the 1960s and 1970s as a kind of proto-ethnomethodology or precursor to more contemporary work, which in this view is "echt" ethnomethodology. I use the term "ethnomethodology" here to refer to work from the 1960s and 1970s, and in particular one line of work developed by my late colleague Harvey Sacks concerning "membership categorization devices," which was at the time still and even especially valued by ethnomethodologists as an important element of that program of studies.

[2]The preceding three paragraphs include citations to treatments of interruption from very different points of view, with varied theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary commitments, not to mention political ones. The early work of West and Zimmerman, for example, represented its authors' efforts to bring their understanding of then-current work in conversation analysis to bear on gender relations, using interruption as a kind of indicator or case-in-point. Much of the literature critical of their work distanced itself from that resource, out of either problematic understanding, disagreement, or both. Still other streams of literature did not treat the connection to conversation analysis as relevant. It is neither possible nor in my judgment necessary to incorporate in the present discussion a differentiated comparative treatment of this literature or these literatures. References to "the literature" in the remainder of the

"Interruption" is ordinarily (that is, vernacularly) used to mean a starting up of an intervention by one person while some undertaking by another is in progress. And it often is used to mean not only a *starting up* of an intervention, but also, as we say, "not letting them finish," a "full-fledged interruption" we might call it, what some of the literature in this area refers to as "successful interruption." The *Oxford English Dictionary* codifies both components when it offers as its account of "interrupt": "to break in upon (a person) while doing something, esp. speaking, to hinder or cause to stop..."

There are, of course, various sorts of units that occur in "speaking" by which and into which "speaking" is organized. Children who have successfully learned to avoid "interrupting" by not talking while someone else *is* may find themselves bewildered to be hushed up upon starting to talk when the room is quiet and to be told nonetheless "not to interrupt." Yet they encounter this contingency if they have not yet learned to analyze the organization of storytelling in conversation and to recognize when a storytelling was "over." So also do they encounter this contingency if they have not yet sufficiently grasped the practices of topic-talk in conversation so as to recognize when some current topic has been brought to possible closure or so as to know how to segue step-by-step from where the talk currently is to what one means to talk about. So stories, topics, and other structured activities that can be pursued in talk-in-interaction (for example, list-making), are vulnerable to "interruption" in the sense conveyed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as is any structured conduct that has a trajectory, one that other events or courses of conduct can intersect before they have reached a recognizable (or plausibly claimable) ending. It is notable, then, that virtually the only unit of talk-in-interaction that has been discriminably targeted in the voluminous literature on interruption is the "turn," that is, the basic unit of talking (in interaction) per se. Although interrupting another may gain its sharpest profile when a story or other such unit is in progress, there is little in the literature that discriminates such interruption from other instances of "break[ing] in upon (a person) while doing something, esp. speaking, to hinder or cause to stop..." (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It is to the turn, then, that we must turn and to its deployment and disposition in talk-in-interaction as organized by systems of turn-taking, for it is by reference to the turn—and its rights and obligations—that "interruption" gets its import.

POINT OF DEPARTURE:
INTERRUPTION OR OVERLAP

The occasion for much of the literature on interruption (and the analytic leverage for the West–Zimmerman work) was one of the central points in the 1974 paper by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (henceforth SSJ) on the turn-taking organization for conversation, namely, that a key design feature for turn-taking in conversation is an orientation to one party speaking at a time; that is, no more than one at a time and no less than one at a time. Among the most common reactions to this claim was the search for counterexamples, and the most common counterexample put forth by critics was that of "interruption" as the most obvious departure from "no more than one at a time;" given all the occurrences of interruption, the argument went, how can one take seriously the claim that people talk one-at-a-time.

There is much that is incorrect in this line of critique, most importantly that failures of

some organized set of practices or operations to work as designed, even on many occasions, is not evidence that it was not designed to work that way or that it does work that way (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 2–3). But for present purposes the key observation should be that, technically speaking, the potential problematic event of this sort for the SSJ account of turn-taking is "more than one talking at a time," and the occurrence in the world that embodies that is not in the first instance "interruption" but "overlap," which is precisely "more than one party talking at a time." The question posed by the occurrence of such events in conversation (and other talk-in-interaction) is: how is overlap dealt with when it occurs in conversation? If nothing special happens, if no note is taken of it, if its occurrence engenders no consequences in the talk or other conduct in the interaction that follows, then there are strong grounds for arguing that the claims of SSJ's account of the turn-taking organization are wrong. If overlap does engender consequences, and in particular consequences designed to eliminate it, then there are grounds for arguing that the SSJ account is correct and describes the operative orientations of parties to conversation.

The Practices of Talking in Overlap

The matter of how overlap is dealt with in conversation and its implications is dealt with in a companion paper to this chapter on overlap management and resolution (Schegloff, 2000). Because its results are germane to the topic of this chapter, I summarize them below in a series of points; in the companion paper they are developed in substantially greater detail, with data (which is sharply limited here because of space constraints) and with analysis that makes explicit how conduct while talking simultaneously embodies the features of social action insisted on by Weber in his explication of social action. In the following section, I take up the question of how the findings about overlap resolution, as well as ones about overlap onset, relate to interruption and the literature about it:

1. Several classes of overlapping talk do appear to be treated nonproblematically in conversation and are not apt subjects for an account of "overlap management" or "overlap resolution" (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 4–6 for matters treated in this paragraph). Overlapping talk from separate conversations is, of course, not a departure from a constraint to have "one speaker at a time in a single conversation." But four configurations of simultaneous talk also are in the first instance beside the point for an overlap resolution device. These are (1) "terminal overlaps" (in which a next speaker starts a next turn by virtue of a current speaker's incipient finishing, but overlaps a bit of its end; (2) "continuers" (such as "uh huh"), which pass an opportunity to take a full turn, while they display an understanding that current speaker is producing an extended turn or discourse unit that is not yet complete; (3) various forms of "conditional access to the turn," in which the intervention of a recipient of a not-yet-complete turn is accommodated within the turn's space as long as that talk furthers the project of the turn-in-progress, for example, by offering a try at a word search or by collaboratively completing and thereby actively coconstructing the turn-in-progress; and (4) various "choral" phenomena, which are either mandated or allowed to be produced in concert rather than seriatim, such as laughter, collective greetings or congratulations, and so on. None of these are ordinarily treated as problematic events interactionally, which warrant deployment of the resources afforded by an overlap resolution device to deal with them (although on particular occasions, any one can be so treated).

2. Overwhelmingly in conversation, "more than one" speaking at a time involves two

speaking at a time, invariant to the number of participants in the interaction. For various reasons, the key configuration of this talk is the one in which the simultaneous speakers are addressing one another [again invariant to number of participants, although obviously in two-person interaction there is no alternative to this configuration (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 7–10)].

3. Most overlaps are over very quickly, although some persist to great length. Many are characterized by hitches and perturbations in their production. An account of the organized set of practices by which overlapping talk is managed and resolved by its participants—an "overlap resolution device"—should provide for and explicate the production of these features (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 10–11).

4. Such a device appears to be composed of three elements: a set of resources for overlap-oriented turn production; a set of places where these resources are deployed; and an interactional "logic" that has those resources in those places constitute "moves" of a describable sort in a competitive sequential topography.

4.1. The resources are deflections or discontinuities of various sorts in the production of the talk: The talk can get suddenly markedly (1) louder in volume, (2) higher in pitch, or (3) faster or slower in pace, depending on where in the overlapping talk it occurs. The talk-in-progress may be (4) suddenly cut off, most commonly with what linguists call a glottal, labial, dental, or some other oral stop; or (5) some next sound may be markedly prolonged or stretched out, or (6) a just prior element may be repeated. Several of these deflections from the "normal" course of production may be combined, as when a speaker repeatedly cuts off a word or phrase in progress and then repeats it, only to cut off the repeat at the same point and redo the entire operation, resulting in a sort of spinning-of-one's-wheels in getting on with it (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 11–15).

4.2. The places can be characterized as phases through which an overlap may develop. Among the most important are preonset and postonset (just before the actual start of simultaneous talk and just after it) and preresolution and postresolution (just before the projectable end of the overlap, e.g., by virtue of the hearable incipient end of one or the other of the simultaneous turns, and just after the resolution, as one turn emerges into the clear). The consequentiality of these phases is observable in their effect on the deployment of the previously mentioned resources. For example, in trying to head off incipient overlap onset (i.e., in the preonset phase), a current speaker may vary the pace of the talk by speeding up; if the overlap has already begun (in the postonset phase), pace change takes the form of slowing down (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 15–19). These are situated actions, not mere arbitrary variations in talking.

4.3. A more finely grained set of places, composed of the successive "beats" (roughly, syllables) of the talk's production, provides the locus for the interactive logic through which the competition for the turn space is worked out. After the first beat of simultaneous talk, each party to it must take up a stance toward the overlap in progress: withdraw (by stopping talking); continue in "solo production" mode; or upgrade to competitive production by deploying one or more of the "resources" described above. The stance each party is taking is displayed in the next beat. At that point each party can assess the stance the other is taking and must react in the next beat by dropping out, continuing (despite the other's tack), or upgrading (or counterupgrading) by use of competitive resources, and so on (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 19–22), until the overlap is resolved by one or both parties coming to the end of their turn in the overlap or withdrawing before reaching it.

5. There are several major outcomes of such competitions. First, many overlaps are resolved after a single beat by the withdrawal of one or both parties at the first evidence that simultaneous talk is in progress. Second, of overlaps that survive the first beat, a great many

end within one beat after one of the speakers upgrades the talk to competitive production, the resolution being implemented by a cutoff by the recipient of the upgrade. Often, the first move to competitive production occurs in the second or third beat of the overlap. A consequence of these observations is that, by the third beat, the vast majority of overlaps have been resolved to a single speaker. Many such episodes represent turn-taking "miscues," involving little interactional investment by the parties. However, overlaps can be extended to considerable length if neither party drops out despite the stances taken by the other, and these invite treatment (both by cointeractants and by investigators) as involving some sort of greater interactional moment or investment for the parties, either proximately interactional (such as needing for various reasons to get something said in that turn position) or representing more distal and even symbolic matters, such as ones of deference, standing, and so forth (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 22–24).

6. The upshot then is that resolution of overlap is an outcome worked out by the parties in a step-by-step, or beat-by-beat, interaction, at each step of which there are options available for responding to the just preceding conduct of the other. Although one cannot predict the outcome, or even how on any given occasion some participant (or class of participants) will conduct themselves (not even the participant can predict this), the organization of practices itself is relatively straightforward (and formal) and allows the parties to negotiate the impasse at just that moment, for just those participants, and for just that juncture of topic and/or action on just that occasion, given who they respectively are—relevantly are—at that moment (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 25–29).

7. There are other criteria of "success" to which parties may be oriented in dealing with an overlap in which they find themselves implicated besides competition to "win" the floor. Among these are talking one's turn to completion, or to a point at which its thrust or upshot is accessible to interlocutors, or so conducting oneself that the ensuing talk in the interaction is addressed to one's own talk in the overlap rather than to that of the other party who is speaking. Orientation to the last of these success criteria in particular may make relevant conduct in the overlap quite different from conduct seeking to win the turn space (Schegloff, 2000, pp. 29–32).

Interruption and Overlap: Onset and Resolution

What is the bearing of this account of overlap management and resolution on "interruption"? Can we simply plug in "interruption" where "overlap" appears? Not really. At most, "overlap" and "interruption" are partially overlapping sets. On the one hand, overlapping talk does not necessarily involve interruption. For example, simultaneous starts by two speakers, neither of whom has special rights to the turn by virtue of preceding talk, can produce overlapping talk without constituting interruption (although, if one of them was the addressee of a question, interruption may be involved, as in footnote 3 below). On the other hand, "interruption" (as the term has been employed) without overlap can occur when the newly entering stream of talk is designed by its speaker to be in continuity and complementarity with the talk already in progress and does not embody the conventional sense of aggression or hostility associated with the term "interruption," what Lerner (1991, 1996) termed "anticipatory completion" and Sacks (1992, Vol. 1) termed "collaborative constructions" (see also Tannen, 1983). To make this much explicit already may be a gain in clarity, and it helps to focus our attention on that intersection at which there is overlapping talk in an environment arguably involving a startup of talk by a new speaker intervening in (and possibly interdicting completion of) an as yet not-possibly-complete turn.

"Overlap," as we have already seen, refers to the sheer fact of more than one person talking at a time. "Interruption," as noted earlier, is ordinarily used to mean a starting up of some intervention by one person while another's turn is in progress, often including "not letting them finish," what some of the literature in this area refers to as "successful interruption." An analytical interest in "interruption" as an interactional event might then be expected to be pursued along two lines. "Starting to talk while another is already talking" directs attention to overlap onset—the start of the talking-at-once. The second aspect of "interruption"— "continuing to talk until prior speaker stops"—directs attention to what happens after the simultaneous talk has already started: the conduct of persons talking simultaneously and its outcome.

THE OUTCOME.   Once put that way, of course, it quickly becomes clear that simultaneous talk does not invariably result in the new speaker preventing the prior speaker from completing what they were saying, and we are invited to see the resolution of such simultaneous talk as a contingent outcome. What it is the contingent outcome *of* and how to describe the organization of overlap resolution in an analytically compelling way and one that gets at the orientations of the participants has constituted the principal interest and result of the companion paper partially summarized above (Schegloff, 2000). The line that has been pursued there takes the outcome of overlap to be, in the first instance, a contingent outcome of the conduct of the parties (rather than, for example, the identities of the parties or any particular aspect thereof), and that paper offers an empirically grounded account of the organization of that conduct and its relationship to other elements of the distribution of opportunities to talk in conversation (and other talk-in-interaction), that is, to the organization of turn-taking.

Of course, the domain of occurrences we have been addressing includes episodes in which the outcome "someone stopping before finishing" was *not* the product of another having invaded their already-ongoing talk, which is another key element of "interruption." This is because the domain that has been under examination and many of the exemplars that have been discussed included overlapping talk in which the speakers started simultaneously.[3]

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[3]It should be noted, though, that some simultaneous starts also involve interruption, as when two speakers simultaneously start an answer to a question that was addressed to one of them, the other's talk then being a possible interruption—of the sequence, not the turn, and often so delivered and received interactionally. For example:

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[US, 123:10-31]
  1  MIKE:   → =Joe,
  2              (0.7)
  3  CAROL:   A ha[ssock
  4  MIKE:   →      [Whatsa di[ffrence b'tween a hassock en 'n ottoman.
  5  VIC:                      [No difference.
  6  JOE:    → [I think it's the shape.
  7  VIC:    → [De difference between a sofa enna cou[ch.
  8  CAROL:                                           [A hassock
  9           [is square like that one you [did befaw.
 10  MIKE:   → [Waidaminnit I didn' ask you, [
 11  VIC:                       [Oh:. Wul [uh-
 12  JOE:                                  [I think it's the shape
 13              (0.8)
 14  MIKE:   The shape?
 15  JOE:    Yeh. (The) hassock is usually round, sits onna floh wit'
 16           no legs. [Where en ottoman,
 17  CAROL:            [A hassock [is square wid[out [legs.
 18  MIKE:                        [Okay.      Now-[
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Still, the organization of conduct we have described can be applied to the more narrowly circumscribed domain in which "interruption" is plausibly claimable.

The outcome, however, is to render this sense or criterion of "interruption"—"causing to stop," as the *Oxford English Dictionary* put it—problematic, and with it the notion of "successful interruption" employed in some of the social scientific literature. If there is an interaction between the parties throughout the simultaneous talk along the lines that have been described, then the unidirectional attribution of efficacy to the interruptor (when one speaker has intersected the ongoing talk of another) misses the real-time heart of the phenomenon. This component of the vernacular sense of interruption and the *Oxford English Dictionary's* account of it conveys a misleading and in fact an inapplicable sense of what actually transpires when more than one is talking at a time. "Causing to stop" is not a unilateral action but an interactional achievement; each party constitutes both agent and patient; either can end up "stopping."[4]

THE ONSET.   The other component of the vernacular "interruption"—starting while another is already talking—is no more straightforward. On the one hand, in a literal sense, it is not required; when another starts talking during an analyzable pause in a current speaker's not-yet-possibly-complete turn, it does not lose its interruptive potential by virtue of the "current speaker" happening not to be literally talking at that moment. On the other hand, such starting is not necessarily interruptive; recall the various incomings that are normative (laughter, greetings) or mobilized (orchestrated co-saying). But these are neither the most common nor the most telling locus of this key element.

The first component of "interruption"—overlap onset—has been systematically described by Jefferson (1984) who has much to tell about where—and by implication how—a

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    19  VIC:                                                        [Waid[aminnit.
    20  MIKE:                                                          [Is- dz a
    21           [hassock actually open up so yih c'n throw] shoes innit? hnhh hih hih!
    22  VIC:     [Ken   I   ask   you   dis,   what's   this. ] ((taps object))
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Here Mike, who works in a used furniture store, has asked Joe, its owner, what the difference is between an "ottoman" and a "hassock" (two versions of footstools). Actually, he already has asked this of Joe just before, only to have Vic, who hangs out in the store, offer an answer. So the extract represents a second try at asking Joe. Note then that Joe and Vic start to respond simultaneously. Yet at line 10, Mike treats Vic's response to be an interruption, and without being cued again, Joe again delivers his answer, this time in the clear.

[4]Although readers committed to the "interruption as domination" view may find this similar to Anatole France's observation that, under capitalism, all are free to sleep under bridges, the rich as well as the poor, the positions are quite different. Unless hierarchical relationships are invariably and exclusively relevant determinants of interactional conduct and invariably result in a "subordinate" yielding to a "superordinate," then something other than the sheer hierarchical positioning is involved, and the conduct in interaction is a prime candidate for relevant consequentiality. [In this regard, recall West's (1979) finding that after onset, there are no gender differences in resolution-relevant practices or outcomes.] That the playing field is not level (when it is not level, when it is relevantly not level) does not entail that the action on the field is irrelevant.

The related notion of "successful interruption" is a problematic usage on other grounds as well, for it appears to be based in the premise that "interruptions" have "forcing the other out" as their goal, so that the other's stopping makes the interruption "successful" (and presumably the other's not stopping makes it unsuccessful, whatever the interruptor has succeeded in saying). It thereby excludes, without making it explicit, those "interruptions" aimed, for example, at coarticulating what another is saying, in which the "interruptor's" saying, rather than the prior speaker's stopping, is the criterion of success (cf. the data extracts in notes 11 and 12). It excludes as well the other success criteria sketched above for overlap; it thereby makes of interruption (and of overlap) a zero-sum game. Insofar as participants do not invariably do so, this terminological move—"successful interruption"—can contribute to the misapprehension of the phenomena involved. Often this is related to a presupposition that interruption is exclusively an indicator and instrument of "domination," a view that the usage "successful interruption" covertly underwrites.

great many overlaps get started. One upshot of her work is that many instances of overlapping talk that present themselves initially to investigators as "interruptions," that is, as invasive social actions, can be quite differently understood and may have been quite differently understood by the participants.

Jefferson formulates three types or categories of overlap onset, each describing an environment in which such onsets occur in terms which embody an orientation by a "recipient–next speaker" to ongoing talk by a current speaker:

1. By reference to one of these orientations, a recipient–possible next speaker monitors the talk-in-progress for its possible completion and "transition-relevance," and launches a next turn's start by reference to this feature of the talk-in-progress. This strategic locus in the organization of turn-taking was termed in Sacks et al. "the transition place" (in contrast to "transition point," cf. Sacks et al., 1974, pp. 705–706, fn. 15) to provide for a range of positions at which transition to a next turn may be relevant and appropriate. Jefferson (1984, pp. 2–18) describes a number of such positions. Some of them embody "terminal overlaps" — of various sorts, of differing degrees of extensiveness, composed differently in their course, and arrived at by various routes—in which a recipient–next speaker starts up a bit before, and in anticipation of, imminent possible completion of the ongoing talk (what Jefferson terms "reasonable turn incursion"). About these instances Jefferson (1984, p. 6) remarks that

> ... at the point of overlap onset the recipient/now-starting next speaker is doing something perfectly proper, perfectly within his rights and obligations as a recipient/next speaker. He is not doing what we commonly understand to be "interrupting"—roughly, starting up "in the midst of" another's turn at talk, not letting the other finish. On the other hand, the current speaker is also doing something perfectly proper. He is producing a single turn at talk which happens to have multiple components in it.

But these "transition-related" overlap onsets include as well instances in which recipient–next speakers start up after a possible completion in the ongoing talk which is followed by a rapid continuation by that speaker (i.e., the prior speaker) starting a new turn unit in the beat of silence ordinarily allowed by a next speaker to pass before starting a next turn (a "rush-through" in the usage of Schegloff, 1982). Here Jefferson (1984, p. 9) observes that much talk that initially presents itself as interruptive "because it start up after a current speaker has shown himself to be producing further talk," and thus appears to be "starting up 'in the midst' of another's talk," otherwise can be understood as positioned by reference to the other's (the prior speaker's) having come to possible completion and transition place—just the place at which it is proper to start a next turn.[5]

2. A second environment for overlap onset can be formulated by reference to another orientation that recipient–possible next speaker brings to the monitoring of talk-in-progress, namely an orientation to what is getting said or done in that talk. At some point in the production of the ongoing talk, recipient–possible next speaker can recognize what is being said or what is being done by that talk: its thrust or upshot. The point at which the ongoing turn-so-far permits recognition of its designed upshot is another environment for overlap onset, what Jefferson (1984) terms "recognitional onset." Such onset is more likely to occur remote from possible completion and transition-relevance of the ongoing talk or the moments just before and after it. It therefore is more vulnerable to being taken by prior speaker (and by

[5]This may apply differentially to subsequent analysts of the tape or transcript, seeing/hearing "interruption" in the retrospective view of the outcome on the one hand and on the other the operating-in-real-time participants, monitoring and projecting the trajectory of the ongoing talk, and acting on the basis of its progressively unfolding elements and their understanding. This disparity can overpromote the post hoc analysis of "interruption."

professional analysts) as interruptive and in that respect problematic and may be oriented to as such by the recipient–next speaker in the very manner of its production.

3. In addition to monitoring "on-line" for possible completion of the turn-constructional units out of which talk is fashioned and for the action, upshot, or thrust of what is being done through that talk, recipient–possible next speaker is oriented as well (and this is a third orientation) to the "progressivity" of the talk in its course. That is, each next moment should deliver something recognizable as furthering the course and trajectory of the talk, and the sorts of occurrence termed earlier in this chapter (and elsewhere, e.g., Schegloff, 1979) "hitches" and "perturbations" can serve to indicate and embody problems with that progress. Such troubles in the talk's progressivity—some embodied in silence or "silence fillers" that are not at possible completions, others by "mid-utterance 'stuttering' "—turn out to be another environment in which overlap onsets occur: a third type that Jefferson (1984) terms "progressional." As she points out, these may variously be seen as invasive and exploiting a "weakness" in the ongoing talk, or as " 'neutral' materials 'drawn' by ... a 'hitch' " (p. 37)[6]

UPSHOT. What is the upshot of this analysis? On the one hand, there is Jefferson's (1984, p. 37) claim that"... *in principle there is no point in an utterance which is proof from systematically-accountable (if not interactionally legitimate) overlap*" (emphasis in original). That is, on this account, taking the several environments that she has described together, in principle, overlap onsets may be found virtually anywhere in an utterance. Some of these overlaps are "by-products" and others represent various degrees of "turn incursion":

> These variously generated onsets can be seen to be at least systematic, if not perfectly "proper," reasonable, legitimate, rightful, etcetera. And with these orderlinesses a mass of overlapping talk is lifted from the realm of nonsystematic, perhaps unaccountable, perhaps only interactionally motivated/accountable "interruption." (Jefferson, 1984, p. 28).

We have here, then, a systematic array of accounts of the onset of overlap (by reference to turn-transition, by reference to early or "premature" recognition of upshot, and by reference to retarded progressivity) that are potentially alternative to an interactionally motivated account formulating the occurrences as "interruption." Yet this treatment does not exclude "interruption" and allows juxtaposition of its formulations with "interruption."

At the very least, it is no longer analytically defensible to treat any startup of overlapping talk (whatever the categorical membership of the participants) as "interruption"—with all the commonsense inferences supported (and invited) by that term—without subjecting the interactional environment of the overlap's onset to inspection by reference to these demonstrably relevant systematic possibilities. The result of such examination is less likely to yield the analysis that "interruption" has occurred where none was suspected than it is to yield the analysis that the finding of "interruption" is called into question by the details of the relationship of the incoming talk to the already ongoing talk. Based on detailed examination of the talk, then, particular instances are apt to slip *out of* the category of "interruption" and not *into* it and *not out of* the category of overlapping talk.

What we have, then, is that neither the starting of a second speaker while a first is already

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[6]It is worth underscoring that Jefferson (1984) has examined a substantial collection of overlap onsets and sorted out environments in which they specially appear to occur. Places with trouble in the progressivity of a turn are such an environment. It does not follow that places of compromised progressivity invite overlap onset, etc., for Jefferson has not examined a collection of such places/occurrences to establish the sorts of things that happen at them and has not found that overlap onset is specially recurrent in them. Her paper reports on orderliness of overlap onset, not orderliness (other orderliness) of the environments in which overlap onset occurs. For a discussion of some problems of progressivity which do appear to invite "interruption" see Schegloff (1979, pp. 272–280).

speaking nor the stopping of a first speaker by virtue of a second having started is a reliable
indicator of "interruption," in the ordinary vernacular sense of that term. Both the onset and
the offset, taken by themselves, are problematic criteria, and in a fashion that does not lend
itself readily to straightforward or formulaic solutions.[7] Whatever its vernacular usage may be,
talking while another is talking is not a reliable indicator or embodiment of what it has been
taken for in intendedly disciplined inquiry.

In the first instance, of course, whether or not some newly starting talk is interruptive or
not is the parties' issue, not an academic one; it is engaged on a case-by-case basis, or rather
as an occurrence within its immediate context (rather than as "one-overlap-out-of-a-
collection"); and it appears that a variety of elements enter into the parties' determination.
What follows is a sketch of some, perhaps many, of those elements and their import for the
understanding of interruption as an interactional occurrence and of "interruption" as an object
of inquiry and topic of empirical–analytic discourse.

WHAT MAKES FOR INTERRUPTION:
THE ROLE OF COMPLAINABILITY

First, it appears that adequate analysis of an overlap as a possible "interruption" in
principle cannot be independent of the character and details of the talk already ongoing (if
there is any)[8] and exactly where in that talk new talk by another gets started. That is, the "turn-
so-far" in its incremental development must be taken to figure centrally, both with respect to
its detailed composition and with respect to the position in it at which the intervention occurs.
Almost certainly we do not yet know the full range of facets of the turn-so-far that in any
particular instance can have a bearing on the matter. But, as noted, the "first possible place" at
which what is being said or done can be recognized has been shown by Jefferson (1984) to be a
place where new and overlapping turns are begun and where new turns designed to do certain
actions (such as showing prior knowledge) should begin (Jefferson, 1973). On the other hand,
agreement tokens interpolated before that point in a turn-so-far at which what is being said is
recognizable are likely to convey that the "agreer" is rushing the turn's completion, the more
quickly to begin their own next turn. Lerner (1991) shows that certain "compound" grammati-
cal constructions can promote the occurrence of "anticipatory completion" by another party
and powerfully shape just where that undertaking should begin (just after the construction's
"preliminary component"), with intervention elsewhere presumably having quite a different
"interruption" potential. The points at which turns-so-far convey what they are saying/doing,
of course, will vary instance by instance-in-context and by virtue of their turn design[9] and will
be parsed for "possible interruptivity" by the parties for that particular instance-in-context.

[7]As, for example, West's (1979) proposal to treat next-turn starts that overlap more than two syllables (or any number,
for that matter) as interruptive; or the suggestion of Wells and Macfarlane (1998) that positioning before the "TRP-
projecting accent" (in combination with features of the incoming talk) is key to constitution of an overlap as
interruptive, on which see below.

[8]The parenthetical qualification here is meant to allow for overlapping talk in which the speakers started simul-
taneously and with comparable entitlement and in which therefore there was no "talk already ongoing."

[9]It seems most likely that prosodic features such as the "tonic syllable" proposed as criterial in an early version of
Wells and Macfarlane (1998) ordinarily derive their criteriality by virtue of their serving to index and embody such
features of turn design, such as "upcoming possible completion" (Schegloff, 1996a, 1998). A wholly different sense
of the relevance of "turn design" may be sought in the consequences of the grammatical characteristics of the
language, for example, what is grammatically favored for placement early or late in a clause; cf. Schegloff et al.
(1996, pp. 28–32).

Second, it appears that the parties' analysis of an overlap as a possible "interruption" in principle cannot be independent of the character and details of the incoming talk, specifically:

1. Issues related to its addressee: Is it addressed to current speaker? To the targeted current addressee of the ongoing talk? To one of a set of possible addressees of the ongoing talk? To none of these? In which case is it then even a candidate for the status "interruption" or is it more properly understood as schism-launching (Sacks et al., 1974, pp. 713–714; Egbert, 1997)?[10]

2. Its displayed relationship to the already ongoing talk: such as (a) an unrelated "side involvement" (as in a request for salt at the dinner table), (b) an aligning utterance (such as continuer, agreement, aligned assessment, anticipatory completion,[11] celebratory uptake,[12] etc.); (c) a misaligned or agonistic stance toward the already ongoing

[10]By "schism-launching" I mean to register the following possibility. In an interaction with four or more participants in which A is addressing B, an utterance addressed by C to D may be understood (depending, of course, on its composition) as potentially initiating a separate, "breakaway" conversation between C and D. In that case, if taken up, the result is two conversations, each with a single speaker, and neither overlap nor interruption would end up having been heard to occur.

[11]Although anticipatory completions are ordinarily designed (by both parties) to be said in the clear, the originating speaker may end up producing the final component as well, and the two articulated completions may not be identically composed, even they are designed to deliver the same completion. for example, in the following exchange Bee is telling Ava about the courses she is taking and comes to the course in modern art:

```
[TG, 8:19-9:02]
   1  BEE:    I'nna tell you on:e course.
   2               (0.5)
   3  AVA:    [(       ).]
   4  BEE:    [The mah-] the mah:dern art. The twunnieth century a:rt
   5          there's about eight books,
   6  AVA:    Mm [hm,
   7  BEE:       [En I wentuh buy a book the other day I [went ] ·hh went=
   8  AVA:                                               [(mm)]
   9  BEE:    =downtuh N.Y.U. tuh get it becuz it's the only place thet
  10          car[ries the book.
  11  AVA:       [Mmm
  12  AVA:    Mmh
  13  BEE:    Tch! En it wz twun::ty do::lliz.
  14  AVA:    Oh my god.
  15               (0.4)
  16  BEE:    Yeuh he- ez he wz handing me the book en 'e tol' me twunny
  17          dolliz I almos' dro(h)pped i(h) [t ·hh ·hh
  18  AVA:                                    [hhunh.
  19  BEE:→   ·hhh I said but fer twunny dollars I bettuh hh ·hh yihknow,
  20               (0.2)
  21  BEE:→   ·hh h[hold o:nto i(h)hh] huhh huh] ·hh!
  22  AVA:→        [not   drop   it. ] huhh huh]
  23               (0.2)
  24  BEE:    Ih wz, (0.2) y'know (fun)...
```

At line 22 Ava (it becomes clear over the course of her talk's production) means to align with Bee by collaborating on the production of this turn. As it happens, Bee completes it herself, with the same upshot but different composition.

[12]As in the following exchange, in which Nancy, a woman of some years, is reporting to Emma on having met a really nice, eligible, man:

```
[NB:II:4:16]
   1  NANCY:    He's jist a ri:l sweet GU:y. .h .t [.hhhh
```

talk (such as disagreement, challenge, repair initiation or correction, etc.); (d) a reparative relation to preceding talk by the same speaker that might bear on the ongoing talk.[13]

3. What its manner of production is: such as muted (e.g., whispered) side-involvement or by-play (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin, 1997), turn-competitive incoming (French & Local, 1983; see also Wells & Macfarlane, 1998), and so forth.

4. What its construction is designed to reveal at the very start about the talk being launched, relative to the turn-so-far into which it is introduced (if any), and how it reveals itself over the course of its progressive real time display.

Third, to the focus on the onset of the overlap featured in the preceding points we must add that adequate analysis of an overlap as an "interruption" will need to consult the character and details of the conduct of the parties to the overlap subsequent to its onset, both during its developmental course and in its "aftermath" position.

Academic focus on these aspects of overlaps that invite attention as "candidate interruptions" or "possible interruptions"[14] may render many apparent "interruptions" equivocal and

---

```
2  EMMA:                              [WONderful.
3  NANCY:     So: we w'r [sitting in
4  EMMA:  →              [YER LIFE is CHANG[ing
5  NANCY:                                  [EEYE::A:H
```

Emma's utterance at line 4 is what I refer to in the text by "celebratory uptake" in raising the issue of the bearing of its character on its treatment as interruption or not. But treating it as an "interruption" could in such a case register not a negative feature of it but the eager supportiveness of what it was doing. My thanks to Paul Drew for having brought the issue and the extract to my attention.

[13]The most common occurrences in this regard are transition space repairs which intersect an already begun next turn. These may be "self-induced," as in:

```
[Heritage:1:5:3–4]
1  DOROTHY:    But (0.4) uh::m (0.9) uh-:: (.) if:: .h.h uhw he won't do
2              whatchu want him tuh do: t- .h twice a week with you'n twice
3              a wee:k with me.
4  EDGERTON:   We:ll we[: we-
5  DOROTHY:  →         [Uh twice a:, a month.
6  EDGERTON:   Well we've got to we've gotta talk to him about it. I haven'
7              mention'it to him yet.
```

Or they may be prompted by a co-present third person who is not party to the conversation, as in:

```
[MDE:60-1, 1:23–29]
1  MARSHA:     What time did'e get on the pla:ne.
2  TONY:       Uh::: (0.2) I: do:n't know exactly I think ih wz arou:nd
3              three uh'clo:ck or something a' that sort.
4                   (0.2)
5  MARSHA:     Oh: maybe he g[o t s ' m]
6  TONY:    →                [He took it] et fou:r. Hilda says.
```

In both instances, a speaker introduces repair (in both instances, self-correction) in talk that intersects another's responsive next turn, which allows that next turn to be responsive to the corrected version. Here again I am indebted to Paul Drew.

[14]For the way in which the usage "possible X" is deployed technically in conversation-analytic work, see Schegloff (1996, pp. 116–17, n.8), reproduced here in part:

The usage is not meant as a token of analytic uncertainty or hedging. Its analytic locus is not in the first instance the world of the author and reader, but the world of the parties to the interaction. To describe some utterance, for example, as "a possible invitation" (Sacks, 1992, pp. I:300–302; Schegloff, 1992b, pp. xxvi–xxvii) or "a possible complaint" (Schegloff, 1988, pp. 120–122) is to claim that there is a describable practice of talk-in-interaction which is usable to do recognizable

possibly "joint productions." But in addition to the actual features of conduct that compose the onset of simultaneous talk and its preceding context, the trajectory of its development to resolution, and its postresolution aftermath, another quite different ingredient figures in its assessment as an interruption as well.

"Interruption" is in the first instance a vernacular term; a term of vernacular description in the practical activity of ordinary talk. Unlike "overlap," it is not designed to do the work of "mere description," nor is it well-designed to serve as a tool for "disciplined" analysis. It is a term of complaint, and its invocation can ordinarily serve to implement the action of complaining. Because the terms "overlap" and "interruption" are part of such contrastive domains, the relationship of "interruption" to overlapping talk is equivocal over and above the sources of equivocality already mentioned.[15] Furthermore, to the several dimensions of analysis by the parties that may inform the stance they take up to the treatment of an overlap as an interruption there is the practical matter of its "complainability" for those parties, at that moment, with those overlapping utterances, and so forth.[16]

"Compainability" appears to be an ingredient of analysis quite differentially accessible to parties to the interaction on the one hand and to external analysts on the other. The former have a direct interactional interest in the matter, practically relevant grounds for assessing it, and the prospect of immediate interactional consequences of acting on it, all of which served to inform, to constrain, and to discipline their treatment of an overlap/candidate interruption. What "standing" (as it is put in the legal system) external analysts have, on what basis they make such assessments, what interests they have in them, and what constrains and disciplines their judgments and the complaints that may issue from them in the absence of proximate interactional consequences remains to be clarified.[17]

But what is the relevance of introducing the observation that "interruption" is not only an analysis of its target occurrence but a complaint about it? That it is *so*, is a matter quite apart from its relevance, after all. Here is one relevance.

If it were the case that the status of some incoming talk as an "interruption" could be assessed by juxtaposing its features (including its relationship to the talk that it intersected and the features of that talk) with formulable criteria, even if fuzzy and sometimes indeterminate ones, then a party-to-conversation could plausibly undertake in principle to avoid "violations" to avoid being found to have interrupted by talking in such a way as to not satisfy the criteria. Avoid the conduct in question and avoid the label entailed by that conduct. But if what is

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invitations or complaints (a claim which can be documented by exemplars of exchanges in which such utterances were so recognized by their recipients), and that the utterance now being described can be understood to have been produced by such a practice, and is thus analyzable as an invitation or as a complaint. This claim is made, and can be defended, independent of whether the actual recipient on this occasion has treated it as an invitation or not, and independent of whether the speaker can be shown to have produced it for recognition as such on this occasion. Such an analytic stance is required to provide resources for accounts of "failures" to recognize an utterance as an invitation or complaint, for in order to claim that a recipient failed to recognize it as such or respond to it as such, one must be able to show that it was recognizable as such, i.e., that it was "a possible X"—for the participants (Schegloff, 1995, 1996b). The analyst's treatment of an utterance as "a possible X" is then grounded in a claim about its having such a status for the participants.

[15]A similar point is made in Bennett (1981).

[16]See the related point in Murray (1985).

[17]It should be clear that I mean here to be calling under review not the commitments or craftsmanship of particular investigators who have worked in this area, often with great skill and dedication, but the analytic terrain to which operating with the notion "interruption" inescapably commits any investigation, given its irremediable semantic loadings and their origin in vernacular discourse and the contingencies of practical action interaction.

involved is complaining, then this is a less plausible tack. In principle, one cannot avoid com-
plaints by avoiding complainables; for virtually anything can be made into a complainable.

For example, a party can turn themselves into an aggrieved party—an "interrupted
party"—although the complaint target does nothing "wrong." Even when there is in the first
instance no overlap at all, a turn-transfer can be reconfigured to make of it a "candidate
interruption." Consider Extract (01):

```
[(01) TG, 14:36–43]
  1   BEE:    t! We:ll, uhd-yihknow I-I don' wanna make any- thing
  2            definite because I-yihknow I jis:: I jis::t thinking:g
  3        →  tihday all day riding on th'trai:ns hhuh-uh
  4            'hh[h!
  5   AVA:    [Well there's nothing else t'do.<I wz
  6            thingin[g of taking the car anyway.] ·hh
  7   BEE:→   [that I would go into the ss-uh-]=I would go
  8            into the city but I don't know,
```

Ava has been trying to entice Bee to join her the next day when she travels from Long Island
into Manhattan to the college that she attends and that Bee once attended as well, before
transferring to another school. Bee has been resisting and is resisting again at lines 1–4, being
in the course of retracting the possible plan of going "into the city" that has elicited Ava's
efforts. It had appeared by line 4 that Bee had possibly finished her turn. To be sure, the turn-
so-far was not grammatically complete, but given the laugh tokens at the end of that line
displaying and projecting the stance she is taking up, the turn-so-far allows analysis by its
recipient (and by us) as a "trailoff" (a form virtually definable by its possible completion
through grammatically incomplete). But when Ava starts to talk (at line 5), displayedly in
response to what preceded, Bee starts up again. The talk that she produces here ("… that I
would go into the city") is designed from the outset to show itself to be *not* a new turn (which
might be taken as "an interruption" of Ava) but "a continuation" of her own prior talk (the so-
called "complement" of the verb "was thinking"), thereby rendering Ava's intervening talk
interruptive of Bee's now retroactively reconstituted "incomplete" talk and shifting the
burden of "possible interruption" from herself to the other.

A similar outcome can be produced without benefit of the claimable ambiguity of the
trailoff. A next speaker can start a next turn after a prior speaker has brought a turn-so-far to
apparent completion grammatically, prosodically, and pragmatically (Ford & Thompson,
1996) and can do so after allowing the normative beat of silence to pass after the possible
completion of the prior talk before staring a next turn. Still, the prior speaker can start up after a
next speaker has begun a next turn and add an increment to the prior otherwise complete turn
which can render the subsequent start to have been a possible "interruption."[18] This happens
twice in the following episode from a conversation between four undergraduate students in a
dormitory room in the mid-1970s:

```
[(02) SN-4 12:35-13:35]
  1            (1.2)
  2   MARK:   That's about it hell I haven't been doing anything but-
  3            (·) s- (Well,) (0.2) going out [a c t u ]ally.
  4   ?KAR:                                   [mmh ]
  5            (0.7)
```

---

[18]Not to mention claims that the prior speaker had some other, larger unit under construction—a story, a topic, etc.—
which was not yet complete.

```
 6  MARK:     I 'aftuh start studying no:w
 7            (0.7)
 8  KAR:      Yeah I shou[ l d  °t  o  o]
 9  MARK:                 [nI've got a pap]er t'write after
10            (0.7)
11  MARK:→    'haftuh wait until Friday.(·) t'see the last films.
12            (0.8)
13  KAR:  →   Y'[d never know I had a] paper due Wednesday, wouldju.
14  MARK:      [in  that  film  class.]
15            (·)
16  MARK:     N[(h)o] hhh=
17  ?RUT:      [(    )]
18  (??)      =h[hhh        ((through nose?))
19  ?RUT:       [°hmhh
20            (0.4)
21  RUTH:     [I h've one] due Thu:rsday
22  MARK:     [(        )]
23            (0.9)
24  RUTH:→    Have one due tih≠morrow.too:.=
25  SHER:     =mmh [ h m h ]
26  KAR:  →   [Isn't it] f[un ta:lking about] it?
27  RUTH:→              [B't it's  finished]
28  RUTH:     Yeah I a[m.
29  ?SHE:             [(h(h)uhh]
30            (0.6)
31  SHER:     It's more fun ta:lking about it then wri:ting them
32  (??)      hh
33            (1.6)
34  MARK:→    Hev en English takehome I 'aftuh do over the weekend, 'n-
35            (0.7)
36  MARK:→    study on Sunday °n Monday,
37            (·)
38  ?RUT: →   (°Oh: I'm s:[:-   (0.2)   ((sn]eeze)))
39  MARK:→                [′r that e:con test.]
40            (2.0)
41  SHER:     Howijuh like t'do our dishes.
```

Mark's recounting of a series of recent exploits is brought to a close after a longish silence at line 1, and the talk turns to pressing school work. Mark is the first to start detailing his obligations (line 9) and seems to be finished (at least with this particular assignment) at line 11. Despite the apparently full-fledged closure of this turn and the longer-than-normal gap of silence following it, when Karen begins a next turn (at line 13) in which she will recount her own current "fix," she has no sooner started than Mark is talking again (at line 14), with talk that shows itself from its outset to be an increment to his prior talk. That prior talk of Mark's is thereby rendered retroactively claimably incomplete, which in turn renders Karen's start-up claimably (and complainably) "interruptive." Moments later, Mark starts another installment of course work that awaits him (line 34), which by the end of line 36 appears to have come to completion, but when Ruthie starts up a next turn after a slightly overlong interim silence, Mark's resumption (at line 39) again renders the newly started turn suspect of "interruption." Nor is this a distinctively male practice; Ruthie and Karen's exchange at lines 24–27 embodies the same trajectory.

In none of these instances, it may be noted, is a complaint about interruption actually articulated; indeed, such voiced complaints are extremely rare in ordinary conversation.[19] Still, in each instance we may note the sort of deflection of "solo production," which suggests movement into competitive production and thereby an orientation to overlapping talk as possibly problematic.[20]

[19]For readers consulting their own personal experience this may appear an odd claim; it may appear that such complaints are not uncommon. But recall that such complaints, encountered either as agent or as target, are "eventful" and thereby memorable, whereas the nonoccurrence of complaints is not. For those who examine a great deal of data of talk-in-interaction as the material of empirical inquiry, these events and occasions for expecting their relevant occurrence appear differently. So examined, complaints about interruption are relatively rare events; cf. Schegloff (1993).

[20]More generally, there are resources by which a party—any party—can register an orientation to intersecting talk as problematic without explicitly complaining about it or formulating it as an "interruption," including the manner of their withdrawal from he overlap and in particular their conduct in what is described in Schegloff (2000, pp. 32–41) as "overlap aftermath," in which parties can display "... how the overlap figured for them in the interactional dynamic of the moment" (p. 41).

    That the issue is "complainability" and not complaints can be seen in the conduct of persons whose talk is vulnerable to being taken as "interruptive" who end their utterance with an apology token such as "sorry" or a registering of their talk as complainable as they surrender the turn, as in the following extract (in which the transfer of some tickets is being arranged), brought to my attention by Paul Drew (and reproduced here from Schegloff, 2000, p. 55):

```
[Holt corpus]
 1   LESLEY:     ... he dzn't normally go on a Fri:day see it's just c'z these
 2               Italian: fellows've come ovah .hh[h an'
 3   HAL:                                          [Oh ee Have the''y.=
 4   LESLEY:     =iYe[:s.
 5   HAL:             [Yeh
 6   LESLEY:→   .hhh And so that's why we're [a bit-
 7   HAL:    →                                [(But)-
 8               (0.3)
 9   LESLEY:     -hh
10   HAL:    →  Ah- (0.2) Oh interrruptin' you I wz g'nna say you could ↓leave
11               it'n I mean if you wanted to come you could j's pay me when
12               you ca:me.
```

Or the following exchange (called to my attention by John Heritage) taken from an encounter between broadcast news interviewer Dan Rather an then-vice-President George Bush during the 1988 primary campaign of the Republican nomination for the presidency, an encounter that was transformed from an interview into what was termed a "confrontation":

```
[Bush/Rather]
 1   GB:    =.hh Mister Buckley, (.) uh: heard about Mister Buckley being
 2          tor:tured tuh death. later admitted (as a) CIA chief. .hh so
 3          if I erred, I erred on thuh side of tryin' tuh get those
 4    →    hostages outta there.
 5   DR:→  Mis[ter Vice President, you set the::]=
 6   GB:      [an thuh who:le story 'ez been ] [told to thuh congress.    ]
 7   DR:                                       [you set thuh rules fer this]::
 8    →     this talk here.=I didn't mean to step on your line there, .hhh
 9          but you insisted thet this be li::ve, an' you
10          [know that we have a limited amount of time.]
11   GB:    [Exactly.      That's      why        I- ] that's why I wanta
12          g[et m]y share in here [on     something] OTHer than what you=
13   DR:    [Now-]                 [Thuh President-]
14   GB:    =wanta [talk about.]
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Note that Bush appears to have come to possible completion of his turn at line 4, after which Rather begins a next

The upshot is that a "charge" of "interruption" is a type of complaint that has an ostensible criterial target, but occurrences of that target only infrequently prompt production of the complaint on the occasion and within that interaction. Furthermore, parties to interaction have practices by which they in effect can "lure" co-participants into conduct that can be transformed into an instance of the complainable, though they do not then complain about it. One conclusion might be then that "complaining about interruption" is an activity substantially disengagable from actual instances of the complainable—some clearly recognizable, interactionally motivated conduct. The complaints may well occur subsequently, in other venues, in other interactions, with other co-participants (for example, among others, in the literature on the topic).[21] But "interruption" does not appear as an actionable complainable in interaction very much. Or it is registered in other ways on the occasion, largely body behavioral—winces, eye aversion, mutual gaze (of a "knowing" sort) between victims and sympathizers (co-class or otherwise). But these can be used to mark registering of and stances toward a variety of conversational doings, of which "candidate interruption" is only one.

I have tried to argue that:

1. Examination of overlap onsets suggests that many that may look (to nonparticipant observers) like interruptions are/were not, in fact, invasive.
2. That does not mean that it is all arbitrary, that all incomings are equivalent with respect to their interruptiveness.
3. For example, conjecturally, the greater the separation of a "recognition point" (Jefferson, 1973, 1984) or problematic progressivity from the transition-space, the more vulnerable an overlap onset there is to being heard as interruptive. But "more vulnerable" is not equivalent to "being" an interruption. That requires the additional ingredient of complainability. On the other hand, some "incomers" clearly recognize that the onset of their talk could be heard as "interruptive" and begin by marking it as such ("Excuse me;" "waitaminnit," etc.).
4. Nor does "making original speaker stop" supply a compelling criterion of interruption. It is demonstrably an interactionally achieved product in which either party to overlapping talk may emerge with the turn or end up setting the terms for the immediately ensuing talk.
5. But why does it matter in the first instance whether some overlap is an interruption? Because whereas "overlap" is a characterization of mere description, "interruption" is not. Calling something an "interruption" implements a further action—a complaint.
6. So assigning to some overlap-event the characterization "interruption" implicates not only the features of that target event and whether it meets some criteria for assignment to the category "interruption,"[22] but implicates as well the features and contingencies

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turn (line 5), only to find that Bush has added additional talk (at line 6), designed as a continuation of his preceding turn. In the course of the ensuing contest for the turn position, Rather acknowledges his commission of an apparent complainable. [On the Bush/Rather confrontation, cf. Clayman & Whalen (1988/89); Schegloff (1988/89).] In these episodes, one of the parties articulates an orientation to the complainability of some prior conduct, but such an orientation can inform and linger on in episodes in which it is not articulated, such as data extracts 1 and 2 in the text, in which a prior speaker adds an increment to their otherwise possibly complete turn after another has started a next turn, even though there is in those extracts no demonstrable orientation to complainability.

[21]Apropos the observation that "... complaints are voiced, if at all, after the fact to a party other than the alleged offender," Don Zimmerman (personal communication) reports, "I have heard such 'testimony' from a number of women about male interruptions on various occasions, including the classroom, where the Z[immerman] & W[est] studies were discussed."

[22]Although some contributors to the literature on interruption decry the use of "objective" criteria of interruption

of "complaining" as a kind of action and the ensuing trajectories of action that it can sequentially implicate. It can embody a moral assessment of the action being characterized and of its agent.

7. These exigencies of "complaining" are very different for parties and for outside analysts. It appears that parties rarely formulate the characterization "interruption" (any more than they do of other actions, but they do for some actions), whereas outside commentators do.

8. In any case, although some configurations of talk, when examined by reference to the relevant features in context, are clearly vulnerable to being termed "interruptions," and although so terming them constitutes a complaint whether done in the same interaction, in another interaction, or in writing about it, neither the features of the characterized event nor the contingencies of characterizing it, i.e., the contingencies of complaining, seem to exhaust what is implicated in discussions of "interruption." What else is involved?

9. An additional ingredient in assessments and charges of interruption seems to be a characterization of the parties composing the overlapping talk.[23] Having earlier disattended as "social organizational" the focus on categories of participant so as to attend more closely to the actions that constitute "interrupting," we now return to those categories. This turning is prompted by the observation that, at least for this-action-so-characterized, its production cannot be described by reference to practices of talking alone, followed by an examination of the particularized deployment and distribution of those practices across contexts and participants. Rather, the constitution of "interruption" implicates a characterization of the participants in the first instance.

INTERRUPTION AS A CATEGORY-BOUND ACTIVITY: A CONJECTURE

An interactional event formulated as "an interruption" is above all a complainable. To ask whether something "*is*" an interruption is to ask whether it is a complainable, but that rests

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(e.g., Bennett, 1981; Murray, 1985), their shortcomings entail problems of various sorts. To mention only one, such "objective criteria" might allow us to register in an analytically defensible way that someone has been "interrupted" even in the absence of their complaining about it or showing any "resistance" to it. Sacks (1992, pp. I:637–638) suggested one basis for not complaining about interruption, namely, that the complaint could itself be treated as a complainable, thereby engendering a sequence on that matter, thereby further subverting the interrupted party's chances of bringing the interrupted talk to completion (or prosecuting the complaint about the interruption to completion, for that matter). Surely there are other bases for "not complaining." As with issues of understanding/misunderstanding, where external analysts must develop an independent account of what some utterance was doing in order to be able to warrant the claim that some interlocutor had possibly misunderstood it and its speaker had let the misunderstanding pass (Schegloff, 1996c, p. 173n), so also with "interruption." In order to be able to argue cogently that someone had been interrupted but was somehow stopped from contesting the violation, one would need an independent analysis of the occurrence—one independent of overt complain or resistance *in* the occasion, which is, after all, just what is being analyzed. For this undertaking and for the possibility of showing that some complaints of interruption are unwarranted and strategic "moves," "objective criteria" are critical resources. This is so not only where the analyst wishes to claim that there was interruption even though the parties appear not to have registered it (Bennett, 1981; Tannen, 1989), but also when the possibility being entertained is that there was not interruption, even though others might claim that there was (Edelsky, 1981).

[23]In the literature, for example, one does not find much research characterizing the parties to "overlap" by categories such as gender, hierarchy, or by any categories, for that matter.

on more than where exactly it started in the talk of another or how it was prosecuted once started. Not that that is not a relevant category for members–participants and one that they "experience," but that does not make it a first-order category usable for professional analysis. Rather than being employed in professional analysis, it is better treated as a target category for professional analysis.

A substantial literature over the last 20 years or so has used "interruption" as a first-order category of analysis. Some combination of onset plus further prosecution of simultaneous talk constitutes an event as an "interruption," independent of who the parties are, and so on. Then one can count the numbers of such events for different combinations of parties (and classes of parties) such as male–male, female–female, male–female, high–low power, and so on. Proceeding in this not implausible way takes as independent matters who the parties are or how they are to be characterized, on the one hand, and how the event is to be characterized or formulated, on the other. The result is as an empirical finding: men interrupt women (West & Zimmerman, 1983) or they do not (Murray & Covelli, 1988); professionals interrupt clients (West, 1984) or they do not (West, 1984); superordinates interrupt subordinates (Kollock et al., 1985); and so forth.

There are two issues to be raised here, which may turn out themselves not to be independent. One concerns how the category set "men–women" (or any other category set for that matter) is to be grounded as a warrantable way to formulate the participants. This is an issue independent of whether it is implicated in the formulation of the object of inquiry as "an interruption." But the second issue (to be explored below) is this: is it not the case that the very formulation of an event as "interruption" may incorporate, or implicate, the category membership of its participants? If so, we need to understand a finding like "men interrupt women" or "doctors interrupt patients" rather differently.

Membership Categorization Devices

As noted earlier, a substantial part of the literature on interruption is focused specifically on its relationship to gender. Much of this work concerns cross-gender relationships, starting with the West and Zimmerman work on male–female interruption disparities (West, 1979; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Zimmerman & West, 1975; and the review in James & Clarke, 1993), while other work focuses on gender-distinctive conduct with respect to talk and simultaneous talk (often with a specific focus on women's talk, for example, Coates, 1988; Coates & Cameron, 1988; Tannen, 1989). In all this literature a key issue that is rarely addressed explicitly concerns the characterization of the participants. The issue may be most suitably explicated here by reference to a central element of Sacks' early work.

The relevant work of Sacks (1972a, b, 1992) was centered on what he termed "membership categorization devices." Among the resources employed for talking in ordinary interaction and in commonsense understanding of the world, persons may be identified, described, referred to and transparently grasped by reference to terms that name categories of persons: [man–woman]; [adult–chid]; [doctor–patient]; [protestant–catholic–jew–muslim]; and so on. These categories compose collections of categories; they are bracketed in such collections in the preceding sentence. That bracketing is an empirical claim about an element of a culture and can be wrong; [man–woman–catholic] would be wrong, for example, as these categories are not parts of a single collection or "categorization device" in American vernacular culture (or any other of which I am aware). Together with some rules for bringing these collections of categories to bear on actual occasions of referring to persons, as well as seeing, hearing,

grasping, formulating, and so forth, the world by reference to persons, these collections constitute "membership categorization devices" (or MCDs).[24]

The importance of these category terms (and their organization) goes far beyond the role they play in persons' practices for referring to other persons (Schegloff, 1996d), important though that be. The categories of these collections are one major repository, perhaps the major repository, for commonsense knowledge of the society by members of the society *as* members of the society. "Knowledge" of what different "sorts" of people are like, what they do, how they behave, and so on—one key element of what is often termed "culture"—is organized and stored by reference to these categories (Sacks, 1992, I:40–49). Among the mechanisms of the organization of such commonsense knowledge is what Sacks (1972, 1992, pp. I:179–181, 236–266; 578–590) termed "category-bound activities."

Within the organization of vernacular or common-sense knowledge, some sorts of activities are "bound" to certain categories of persons.[25] One might be able to convey that someone was a member of some category by attributing such an activity to them (Sacks, 1972, 1992, pp. I:301). One could provide a transparent account for someone having done some action or behaved in some way by involving their membership in that category, for example, by referring to them with a reference form—a "category label" (Moerman, 1988)—which names a "sort" of person who does that sort of thing. Indeed, one could figure who had done some action, especially a problematic one, by seeking out persons who were members of a category to which actions of that sort were bound, who were "known" to do "things like that." As Sacks put it in his initial discussion of this matter in an early one of his lectures (1992, p. I:180).

> The fact that some activities are bound to some categories is used, then, in a tremendous variety of ways, and if somebody knows an activity has been done, and there is a category to which it is bound, they can damn well propose that it's been done by such a one who is a member of that category.
> What's important, in part, is that it's not the case that deviant activities are especially problematic, but there are categories of persons who do deviant activities and you've got a solution to a deviant activity if you've got a member of a category which is known to do this.

Referring to someone by such a category term or seeing/hearing them as a member of a category provides for bringing to bear a stock of commonsense knowledge on that person by virtue of that categorical membership (Sacks, 1992, I:40–49). The import of these resonances of category terms is not restricted to conversational contexts but is pervasive in the deployment of language and other symbolic resources in cultural expression. We will return to the bearing of category-bound activities to the present concerns in a moment, but it is first in point to draw out one major consequence of the operation of MCDs that Sacks described.

Because at least two of these MCDs (for example, age and sex) can categorize any person at all, there always will be more than one category term that can be used to refer correctly to any person. Anyone who is female also will be adult or child. Of course, there are many, many other correct category terms that can be used to refer to any person and to inform one's auditory or visual grasp of them. The consequence is that one cannot account for referring to someone as an "adult" because they are, in fact, an adult; they are, in fact, many other things as well. So that way of referring to them, of categorizing them, is profoundly equivocal.

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[24]Subsequent work undertaking to exploit and develop these initiatives of Sacks may be found in Jayyusi (1984) and Hester and Eglin (1997).

[25]A similar point is explored in relating activities to settings in Levinson (1979). The notion of forms of conduct that index social types is pursued in Ochs (1992) and in Brown and Levinson (1979).

Without some grounding of the relevance of that categorization—of *any* categorization—it lacks a compelling warrant, for its correctness by itself does not warrant its invocation on any particular occasion. Given the centrality of the categories in organizing vernacular cultural "knowledge," this equivocality can be profoundly consequential, for which category is employed will carry with it the invocation of commonsense knowledge about that category of person and bring it to bear on the person referred to on some occasion, rather than bringing to bear the knowledge implicated with another category of which the person being referred to is equally a member.

There does not seem to be any general method for establishing the exclusive relevance of any particular category or any particular categorization device. Anyone who is a female is lots of other things as well, as is anyone who is a male. In interaction, selection among the alternatives is grounded in relevance rules, recipient design, the activity being done, and so forth and is accessible to interactional accountability—challenging, convergence between participants, and so on. The same logic applies to noninteractional venues, like writing, research, and so forth (although not necessarily the same accountability).

Without some explicit grounding of the relevance of characterizing the parties to the events being described as "male" and "female," as "doctor" and "patient," as "manager" and "worker," then the claims in the literature on interruption, in common with those of the rest of social science that has proceeded in this way, are profoundly equivocal. This has been aggravated in the case of the literature with which we are concerned here because (1) the events being treated—formulated as they were as "interruption," i.e., a complainable action—were being directed at a category or categories of persons, and (2) the argument has strongly implied, if it has not said so explicitly, that the "interruptors" (whether "male," "professional," "higher status/power," etc.) were doing what they were doing to the "interuptees" by virtue of being themselves male and the others being female, being themselves managers and the others being employees, and so forth, i.e., that these categories informed the parties to those interactions, on the occasion of these actions, as the relevant capacities (or among the relevant capacities) in which conduct was being produced and understood. (This has been as true of the writings in the literature which have contested these findings, or which have sought to characterize the distinctive conduct of some interactants by reference to such categories, e.g., how women talk by virtue of being women.) This surely is the way in which the categories as repositories of commonsense knowledge work. The unproblematicalness with which this presupposition has been put forth, on which the interest of the findings has rested in substantial measure, stands in startling contrast with Sack' demonstration of its profound equivocality. However, raising this issue has at times been treated as antifeminist; even proposing that analysis was required to establish that gender categories were in fact demonstrably relevant to the parties on the interactional occasion of an interruption has often seemed to be taken as offensive.

In what follows, I want to understand both the initial and persistent appeal to plausibility and believability of the findings concerning categorical bases of interruption and the treatment of the questioning of the categories' relevance as offensive. What I think we will find is that the two types of issue that I have raised—about the characterization of the events as "interruption" and of the participants as "male–female" or other such categories—are reflexively connected. Explicating their sources and their connection, however, serves not only to explicate the implicit critique and ground it, but may contribute to rehabilitating the very findings that were being opened to question, or at least allowing a recasting and reappreciation of their import.

Interruption as a Category-Bound Activity

Perhaps I can introduce the conjecture in the following way. Commonly the participants to interaction where interruption figures are not understood or described in such anonymous and activity-specific terms as candidate-interruptor or interrupted. Rather, they are as a matter of cultural practice (both putatively on their part qua participants, and on the part of observers) understood to be members of deeply grounded categories of societal membership, the categories composing the membership categorization devices, but those categories reconfigured in a particular way. In this configuration, the categories come in coordinate pairs, as in: candidate–interruptor is male, candidate–interruptee is female; candidate–interruptor is employer, candidate–interruptee is employee; candidate–interruptor is teacher, candidate–interruptee is student; candidate–interruptor is professional, candidate–interruptee is client; and, generically, candidate–interrutor is *super*ordinate (in power, status, class, income, wealth, knowledge, skill, prestige, legal entitlement, etc.), candidate–interruptee is *sub*ordinate (in the same resource)[26]

The relevant practice can be formulated this way: Confronted with some action that can be taken as an "infliction," if the action is one bound to members of one category as the doer–agent and to members of another category as the victim–patient, and on a given occasion the actual agent and patient are members of the appropriate categories,[27] then "see it that way." [I use here the format of Sacks' (1972a) "viewers' rules," which I will call "observer's rules" to include more than just visual perception.] Then, treating "interruption" as a category-bound action—done by "employers" to "employees," by "men" to "women," and so on—such occurrences get their character as actions—as "interruptions"—via the membership categories of which the involved parties are members, as they in turn reflexively get their relevant identity and characterization (as male–female, professional–client, etc.) via the parsable action that it makes "transparently" graspable.[28] This reflexive practice thereby constitutes a

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[26]Indeed, when Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989, p. 425) characterize the literature in this area, the categories they find are exclusively those of putative hierarchy. They write, "Earlier studies have found that men interrupt women, adults interrupt children, doctors interrupt patients (except when the doctor is a 'lady'), the more powerful spouse interrupts the less powerful one, and those with masculine identities interrupt those with more feminine self-images." For the point being discussed in the text, it matters less that the aggregate finding on male–female interruption appears to be inconclusive (cf. the review by James and Clarke, 1993) than that there is a nearly exclusive focus on these categories of inquiry. It is striking to have the finding that "adults interrupt children," with no report about children interrupting adults, or the finding about doctors interrupting patients, juxtaposed with the observation of Paul Drew (personal communication) regarding doctor/patient interaction: "In many cases instances of overlap in which doctors begin speaking whilst patients are already talking are identified—and vilified—as 'interruption.' ... However, points where patients begin speaking whist doctors are still doing so (much more frequent in my experience) are not so treated." Indeed, it is striking that the whole enterprise revolves around categories of person altogether, whether by reference to gender, occupation, place in hierarchy, cultural membership, etc., rather than being focused on the conduct together by which outcomes get interactionally produced. Although some complain about the "inevitability" of references to the West and Zimmerman work which they criticize (Talbot, 1988, p. 113; Murray, 1988, p. 115), what is even more striking is the invocation of categories of members of the society as the decisive way of formulating the character of their conduct. This resonates deeply with the mundane operation of the categories of membership categorization devices and with the workings of category-bound activities in particular.

[27]That is, if they can be mapped into the appropriate categories such that the one who intruded on ongoing talk is a member of a superordinate category and the one intruded upon is a member of not merely a subordinate category, but of such a subordinate category as is paired with the category of which the intruder is a member.

[28]Another such reflexive codetermination of action and participants is described by Sacks (1992, pp. I:594–596) in showing how a veiled move to end a therapy session gets its recognizable import as that action by reference to its having been articulated by "the therapist," i.e., by an individual whose formulation as "therapist" is made relevant

solution to the equivocality problem in formulating/referring to persons; it serves as a relevance rule by which a particular way of grasping and formulating the participants in a scene can be grounded and preferred over others.

This way of proceeding can be proposed to be that used by members in situ as a vernacular interpretive procedure, or not. If it demonstrably is, it can be (and should be) so described by professional analysts. But it is far from clear that it should be adopted by professional analysts as a first-order orientation in their own right to yield analyses of how interaction is coconstructed by parties in its course.[29]

Again, then: Seeing the events as "interruption" in such instances[30] is category-bound not to a discrete MCD or a particular category in an MCD but to a variety of paired category terms that share the feature of relative super/subordinacy.[31] There thus is a reflexive cograsping of the nature and character of the event/action that has occurred and the relevant identities

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by an utterance which, if articulated by "therapist," signals the ending of the session (with subsequently implicated consequences for the copresent others), but which would not do so if articulated by anyone else, i.e., by any of the other bodies in the room or by anybody not formulated as "therapist."

[29]The issue here is the unproblematized incorporation by professional analysts of vernacular "knowledge" as an unexplicated component of their own analyses. For a more detailed explication of the problem here, cf. Schegloff (1992, pp. xli–xlii).

   Several collegial readers of a draft of this chapter have alerted me to a possible misconstrual of what I am suggesting here, namely (as one put it) that I am "charging that researchers are biased (or blinded) by their reliance on commonsense knowledge of such matters. It usually is the case that 'interruption' is given an operational definition, and assuming competent execution of such operations, a classification of events emerges which could show that women interrupt more or that there is no difference (as has been shown by some studies)." Let me be clear: (1) The issue is *not* operationalization and scrupulous observance of appropriate coding procedures in deciding which cases should be counted as "interruption." (2) There is an issue about the relationship between the judgments made by following such a procedure scrupulously and the judgments made by the parties to the interaction in situ. For the type of inquiry at issue here, it is how the participants understand some overlapping utterance—as interruption or not—not the treatment of it by external analysts, no matter how impeccable, that matters, and that must be located in the data of the interaction, not the coding procedures of the investigators. But even that is not the crux of the issue being raised here. (3) Even if each coding decision about overlapping utterances were then reinforced by data analyses grounding the result in the observable conduct of the participants, there would still be the issue of the formulation of the participants as "male" and/or "female," or any other of the categories recurrently employed in the literature. Those too need to be grounded in the observable conduct of the parties. To warrant employment of those categories, it would need to be shown that the parties were oriented, just when the putative interruption occurred, to the category assignments in question in order to ground the investigator's decision to employ those categories rather than any of the other ones available in the cultural inventory of the participants. (On some ways this might be approached, see the second paragraph of note 37.).

   This is clearly not how the investigators came to employ these categories. How do they come to use the categories and category sets they do? They might well point to the theoretical or analytical resources of their disciplines. For most of the social sciences, these converge to a substantial degree with the categories provided by the vernacular or commonsense culture, but in an aggregate or generic fashion, not as prompted by the particularities of situations as they arise. It is here that the claims of the text find their point: how inquiries come to be couched in the terms they are, not only with respect to the target event or dependent variable (here "interruption") but in terms of the universe of discourse by which and in which a solution is to be found. That is how Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989) could find (cf. note 26) only the categories they did in their survey of the literature, with no reports of children interrupting adults, of patients interrupting doctors, or more compellingly of any reports couched in terms of categories that are not hierarchically positioned. Further discussion of these issues may be found in Schegloff (1997a) (which, as it happens, deals with an instance of overlap/interruption and its relationship to gender) and in several rounds of exchange with Billig about this chapter (Billig, 1999a,b; Schegloff, 1999a,b).

[30]Obviously not all instances of "interruption" are constituted or construed in this way, or even all those involving participants who can be identified with the relevant category terms.

[31]This is not the MCD (referred to as "R") in which paired-category terms figured in Sacks (1972a). Those were paired relational terms as a locus of obligation, terms of kinship and relationship. These are terms of paired hierarchy.

of the parties engaged in it for observers (which has been the point of departure for the discussion here), but also potentially for the participants as constituting observers of their own interaction. Indeed, such a grasping by observers is on behalf of the participants.

What lends the character of interruption to the events in the talk is the categorical membership of the parties and their distribution of participation or "mapping" in the action (male as interruptor, etc.). What makes male–female self-evidently the relevant set of category terms is the action, once it is formulated as "interruption." Indeed, the categories and category-bound activities can come to figure not only in the interpretation and parsing of the conduct but in its production. The action comes to be seen as a way of "doing being male–female," of "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987; see also Ochs, 1992).[32] Hence, the irritation that can arise with challenges to provide empirically grounded analysis to establish the relevance of these otherwise equivocal (if ungrounded) categorical identifications. The result is "irritation" or "outrage" because the request for demonstration ipso facto constitutes a nonparticipation by the questioner or critic in the cultural practice which renders the linkage of action-type to membership category transparent via the operation of the "category-bound activity."[33]

This "divergence of perspective" is at the level of the academy and social science. But it also may be a divergence among the primary interactants. There has been much discussion of events that reveal that "whites" see some action as indifferent to race (e.g., a merit denial of "an employee," the prosecution of "a celebrity" for murder) at the same time that "African Americans" see it transparently as informed by considerations of race. This is sometimes attributed to a kind of "omnirelevance of race" for African Americans. A similar omnirelevance of gender is also sometimes invoked, in the same bifurcated way: a stance and vision transparent for women, occluded for men.[34]

The conjecture here raises a related but less broad possibility. Instead of omnirelevance, we may entertain the possibility of divergent or variant ties of category-boundedness, which provide under restricted conditions for differing grasps of "what" has happened and "who" has participated in it. Not everything is a candidate for these divergences. Rather, the right configuration of witnessed event—candidate-characterizable as an instance of action X, together with participants appropriately implicated in its occurrence—candidate-characterizable by categories Y and Z, can get grasped as a *gestalt* by those who have that way of seeing which provides for "such a person" doing "such an action" to "such an other person," and will not be so seen by those who do not have that way of seeing/hearing.[35]

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[32]There is a resonance here with the view that treats so-called "women's language" not as some sort of biological inheritance but as a practice for the embodiment of a social identity. It seems more cogent to distinguish (if they can indeed be distinguished, which is by no means assured) different practices of talking without at the same time identifying them with categories like gender categories—call them type A and type B—and then specifying differential distribution of these practices among relevant social categories, if any. It might then turn out that some configuration of practices (e.g., the familiar hesitant, self-effacing, etc.) is both treated as specially affiliated to women (either productionally or indexically) and is specially vulnerable to intervention by others (e.g., by way of the overlap onset characterized by Jefferson (1984) as "progressional," i.e., attracted by the retarded progressivity of the talk marked by multiple self-interruption and restart (and see Schegloff, 1979). A great deal of work remains to be done before such a view could be supported with confidence. I am indebted to Celia Kitzinger for suggesting that this connection be made explicit here.

[33]It may be, in this respect, akin to the reactions of some of those unknowingly co-opted into participation in Garfinkel's demonstrations regarding the operation of commonsense knowledge (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 35–75).

[34]For further discussion of omni-relevance and gender, cf. Schegloff (1992, I:xlviii–l, liii–liv).

[35]Recall here Sacks' (1992, pp. II:184–187) in some respects similar discussion of whites and blacks seeing "cops on a scene with trouble," whites seeing them as the fixers of it, blacks seeing them as the causes of it.

The upshot of this discussion is not that there is no such thing, no such studyable and describable category of events, as "interruption." Nor that it is "uninteresting" (in a scholarly/scientific sense) to study it. Nor that it is not worth studying it by reference to gender. Instead, I have tried to review a variety of elements of conduct that contribute to the eligibility or vulnerability or candidacy of an occurrence in conversation to being taken by a party (or the parties) to it as "interruption," the makings of "possible interruption," which is to treat "interruption" not as a transparent tool of analysis but as a problematic component of the object of analysis. The elements have included many familiar features of the already ongoing talk and of the newly starting talk and perhaps some that are less familiar. To these I have tried to add quite a different sort of ingredient that may figure in the treatment of a spate of overlapping talk as an "interruption": the vernacular origin of the notion "interruption" and its associated action import of "complaint." I have tried to add another different sort of ingredient: the on-occasion inseparable relevance[36] of the mapping of actual participants into hierarchical category pairs, on the one hand, to the constitution/recognition of an occurrence of an "incoming" as an "interruption," on the other—the category-boundedness of the activity and the activity-triggered relevance of the membership categories.[37] "Interruption" is a real

[36]By this term I mean to note both that not all casting of incoming talk as "interruption" is so constituted (the "on-occasion" part) but that on the occasions that work this way, the mappings of the participants into membership categories and of the event into the action category "interruption" are inseparable.

[37]Elsewhere (Schegloff, 1997a, pp. 180–182) I take up another instance in which an activity implemented in the talk prompts the introduction of a category term (also a gender category) that has not (ostensibly) otherwise figured in the activity of the moment. A young man at the dinner table, being passed the butter that he has requested, rejects, or mock-rejects, the requests for it of two other diners and then adds, "ladies last," thereby introducing a category that, however correctly and differentially it formulates its referents, is on the face of it not relevant to the activity at hand and that has not otherwise figured in the preceding talk. How the talk engenders the invocation of the category is taken up there and is not relevant here, but the episode reinforces the conjecture that activities can trigger the relevance of categories, even ones that may not otherwise be implicated in the setting at the moment.

But need there be explicit mention of a category (as in "ladies last") in order to show the parties to be oriented to it? How otherwise can it be shown? This question takes on some urgency for those interested in category-related treatments of conduct, who take seriously the need to ground the relevance of the categories in the displayed orientation of the participants in the interaction (cf. note 29). It is not a question that has an established answer that can be simply delivered; it is an issue for a projected line of research that will have to be developed by those committed to pursuing it. I can suggest a promising starting point, however, and that is what is termed in conversation analysis the practice of recipient design [Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1972 (where it is referred to as "membership analysis"); Sacks & Schegloff, 1979)]. This refers to the many ways in which talk (and other conduct) is designed to be suited to the recipient to whom it is directed (sometimes specified to a particular known individual, sometimes categorical in character), a practice that then can be consulted for what it reveals about the speaker's orientation to the recipient. I offer here only three sketchy cases in point as illustrations. (1) While shopping once at the local farmer's market, I was complimented by the woman selling pistachio nuts on the boldly patterned shirt I was wearing. When I thanked her, she went on to inform me that it was Thai in origin. I replied that I knew that, and as I walked away, I remarked to my wife that she had offered that information to me as a man; she would not have volunteered it to a woman. The recipient design involved here involves what men as compared to women are taken to know (here about clothing). (2) Some years ago, my colleague Gene Lerner, examining my collection of other-initiated repair sequences (Schegloff, 1997b) happened to examine the instances then already partially analyzed in which women were the speakers of the so-called "trouble-sources" and men were the initiators of repair. The result was described by Heritage (1995, p. 405) as follows: "Or again, in a technical demonstration of a computer program for working with conversational materials, Lerner and Schegloff (personal communication) ran a cross-tabulation linking repair initiation by males on female talk with the content of the repair and found a larger than expected number of cases where the object of the repair initiation was an unusual color term. Here might be an empirical lead on the claim by Lakoff (1975) and others that women use more unusual color terms than men. And still more intriguingly, it opens up an opportunity to explore the possibility that these repair initiations are a vehicle through which males can assert a masculine identity and thereby 'do gender' in interaction" (West & Zimmerman, 1987). (3) Gail Jefferson has an unpublished paper (1997) on the recipient design of laughter by putative "Tarzans" for putative

category of event of members of the society; it is socially situated by them in particular ways; it is not for students of the society to affirm it or deny the category or how it is situated. It is for students of the society to get a handle on how it works and it should not surprise us when that is different from the vernacular grasp of it, and indeed takes the vernacular grasp of it as a major part of what is to be understood.

In the end, it appears that "interruption" is the wrong level of granularity (Schegloff, 2000b) to capture the dynamics of what is going on at the appropriate level of detail, in an appropriately "technical" way, that is, as a matter of technique, of "practice." As a matter of practice, talking-in-interaction relative to others' talk, whether in overlap or not, has to do with where/when to come in under relevantly calibrated and formulated analyses of the state of the talk and positions in it, what to do beat by beat, and so forth. "Interruption" is a vernacular gloss for what it treats as "an event," whose design is precisely to submerge and lose the "technical" (or "technique-al") details in favor of the "upshot" vernacular interactional import. The two takes are alternatives, perhaps irreconcilable alternatives, because the "details" call attention to themselves and lead analysis down their path, which is disabling for parsing-for-interaction, for which the interactional upshot is the critical focus. There is very likely no formula for converting one to the other. The "upshot" is designed to avoid just this attention to technique-al detail and to have the upshot level of granularity be the thing focally analyzed for its import for the interaction. This is the interface between action-as-product and practice-as-method.

DISCUSSION

The central contribution of this chapter and its companion (Schegloff, 2000) has been a detailed analysis of a recurrent contingency of talk-in-interaction—more than one person talking at a time—and its management and an incorporation of the resulting account into an expanded formulation of the organization of turn-taking for conversation. The line that has emerged from these undertakings then has been juxtaposed to prior treatments of a closely related but importantly different phenomenon—interruption—in an effort to clarify some of the issues posed by the literature on that highly visible topic. Before concluding, it may be useful to elaborate some the work developed here for traditional sociological and social psychological interests in power and status as these are played out in the arena of "interruption" in talk-in-interaction, even though conversation-analytic interests in these topics will be quite different.[38]

"Janes," with consequent responsive laughter or its withholding. In such instances, there is no overt reference to gender categories, and yet gender-relevant orientations are displayed. The same resource, I might add can be used for other categories and MCDs as well. (My thanks to Celia Kitzinger for suggesting that I address this matter here.)

[38]And in many instances incompatible. For example, in the remainder of this section I continue to discuss "successful interruption," even though I have earlier found this notion problematic on a number of grounds: (1) The dropping out of one party to an overlap is a contingent product of conduct in the overlap, conduct which is variously motivated. (2) This conduct is a property of overlapping talk, not interruption per se. (3) "Successful interruption" presupposes that intervention is designed to drive the other out and more particularly for the new speaker to drive the prior speaker out, but (a) that is often not what the intervention is for (as in aligning coconstruction), and (b) when it is the "goal," it can be the goal for either party, but only one direction of forcing out is counted as "success." (4) The correlative presupposition is that "dropping out" is "losing" or "failure," but (as shown in Schegloff, 2000, pp. 31–32), it can be a move in an alternative and "larger" success strategy, i.e., to shape the immediately following course of the talk. The upshot, to my mind, is that "successful interruption" is a deeply flawed analytic tool, even if it has a prima facie vernacular resonance. This last feature may prompt social psychologists to incorporate "successful

One payoff promised by this work is an (the) interactional mechanism by which the effects otherwise represented by statistical associations are produced by the participants. Finding a relationship between status/power and interruption or "successful" interruption [whether in contexts meant to approximate the work place a la Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989), or long-term personal relationships a la Kollock et al. (1985)] is analogous to finding an association between smoking and cancer: The association may seem robust, but lacking the mechanism by which it is produced, the phenomenon remains less than fully understood. To be sure, Kollock et al. (1985) make a compelling case for their disentangling of gender per se and power relations in the conduct of interaction. Smith-Lovin and Brody effectively sort out the claimed effects of gender, power, and the sex composition of the interaction. What is lacking is the "cellular biology" that "closes the connection," which explicates the mechanism linking the outcomes being studied, initiating interruptions and "succeeding" with them, and the variables which assertedly engender these outcomes.

If it were just the greater status or power of one of the parties (in whatever context made such factors efficacious), then the outcome would be determined by the onset; all lesser power/status speakers would stop right after interruption by a higher status/power interruptor. But not all interruptions are "successful" in driving the prior speaker out and many that are successful are successful only after a stretch of talking at once. So something more apparently is involved than status and power in the abstract and in principle. Several sorts of "something more" invite consideration.

One is this. In order to establish the effects of high status or power, researchers procedurally "remove" other effects, varying them or holding them constant by experimental design or statistical manipulation, and so forth. They are treated as "confounding effects" that need to be filtered out so as to establish the robustness of the relationships being studied. But for the participants in the real world, those effects are co-present; it is the "natural" operation of the real world that put them there for experimenters and analysts to control. It is the multiplicity of category memberships, identities, situational contingencies, proximate interests, and projects in the interaction, what is discussed elsewhere (Schegloff, 2000) under the rubric "investments," which inform any person at any moment that is at issue. How do the parties achieve the relevance of their relative power and status (among all other features and projects of the setting) in some here-and-now (if indeed they do so)? How is that activated (if it is) so as to have the effects that researchers claim them to have? Is it exclusively by some anterior, cognitively processed and affectively informed orientation to one another? Or do the parties do things that engender others' orientations to the features in question, features such as their relative power or status? And how? That is what conduct in the overlap can be about: activating whatever features can be found to make it relevant for the parties. For the objectively factual higher power of one of them, or their gender, remains to have its relevance activated at some here-and-now, and when it is not made relevant, perhaps the higher status/power member of the interaction does not start in the course of another's talk, or having started does not press the matter to "success" (or is committed to a different criterion of success).

More lies down this path: once this issue is taken seriously, how the status/power of the parties is made relevant, at a determinate moment, out of the range of identities and other features of the interaction that have a claim on the next increment of conduct, it is not only the instances in which the high-power party's interruption is, for example, not successful that

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interruption" in further inquiry nonetheless, and I include it in this section of the chapter for that reason. Similar grounds inform other instances in which this section appears to revive notions seriously called into question in earlier sections.

invites review. Even if the "power differential" has been made relevant, it does not follow that it—or it alone—accounts for an overlap/interruption's outcome. All instances invite reexamination to elucidate what social and interactional process a particular successful interruption exemplifies and illuminates.

Features other than power/status aside, a second sense of the "something more" to be pursued may be couched as a question: how does the activation of those features, whether status or power or gender per se, come to have the effects which it does? How does higher status "lead to" overlap onset? How does it lead to "successful" interruption, i.e., to the dropping out of the prior speaker? As noted earlier, if what was relevant was just the fact of differentials in status or power, the "lower status/power" interrupted party would "fold" at the first hint of overlap. This is another thing then: explicating in detail the "translation" of the relevant "factors" into their moment-to-moment import for the conduct of the parties—*both* of them—and how contingent outcomes (sometimes "success" for the interruptor, sometimes not) are produced by the consequent conduct in interaction.

Smith-Lovin and Body (1989, p. 432), for example, write that

> ... interruptions are more likely to succeed against women than against men (especially when interruptions are disruptive and negative in character). men, on the other hand, are more able to fend off potential disruptions, especially when directed at them by women (... especially ... with neutral interruptions).

But how are these successes and "fendings off" achieved? How do they vary by tenor of interruption (i.e., "disruptive," "negative," "neutral")? If status and power make a difference, it not only is by "recipient design," that is, by the design of conduct by reference to the identity of the recipient, whether categorical, relational, or personal, it also is by step-by-step working out in the interaction what the outcome of the overlap—*this* overlap—is to be. For the most part, Smith-Lovin and Brody's account is conceptual, categorical, psychological, and conjectural. But some empirically specifiable mechanisms are involved.

Similarly, Kollock et al. (1985, p. 40) report that "interruptions are clearly a sign of conversational dominance"; but, noting that in more than half the cases the interrupted party did not yield the floor, they go on to suggest that "Perhaps ... it is better to think of interruptions as *attempts* at conversational control. Successful interruptions, then, become a more sensitive measure of *actual* dominance." But what then—interactionally, behaviorally— makes of an "interruption" a "successful interruption?" Whether or not this "success" in indicative of dominance or of something else, how is what it achieves achieved?

Indeed, perhaps the "something more" that invites inclusion in these accounts is the very locus, the very mechanism, by which power and status are brought to bear, are embodied, are parceled out in limited or unlimited commitments. The operation of this mechanism is directly observable and describable—it is the overlap resolution device described in the companion to this paper, or some subsequent, more sophisticated version of it. Whatever conceptual intermediaries are invoked or hypothesized to account for the observed results (Kollock et al., 1985, pp. 42–45; Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1989, pp. 432–434), surely the conduct through which the effects are achieved must play a central role in the account. In the end, it is that conduct that closes the connection between gender–status–power and interactional outcome.

Again, let me be clear. I am not here arguing the position that interruptions or "successful" interruptions, in the vernacular import of those terms, are not a matter of status, power, dominance, gender, and so forth; only that, if that is so, some sort of linkage—in conduct, not in concept—needs to be shown.[39] Studies too often disengage an outcome, such as the

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[39]Nor am I arguing for further experimental studies to do the showing. It is in the analysis of the raw materials of interaction that the showing is to be done, preferably in naturally occurring interactions of the participants' ordinary

occurrence of, or success of, an interruption, from the behavioral and contextual elements in which it was embedded and by reference to which it was produced by the participants; they aggregate such disengaged outcomes and relate them, instead of to their real life context in the round, to disengaged elements of the investigator's preferred analytical commitments. That may not necessarily yield problematic outcomes within the investigator's own frame of reference, but it does replace statistical and conceptual representations disengaged from their empirical counterparts for the robust and textured configuration of elements (or rather, the preserved detailed records of them) in which the outcomes of interaction were formed up.[40] Where the understanding of an empirical process is in question this is not desirable, and it is not necessary. The work reported earlier in this chapter and its companion may provide resources for enriching work in this genre in this respect.

CONCLUSION

Having elsewhere provided an account of the practices by which overlapping talk is resolved in conversation and other forms of talk-in-interaction (Schegloff, 2000), I have tried here to work out the implications of this aspect of the organization of turn-taking for a proper understanding of interruption, which over the last 30 years of social science inquiry has received the bulk of the attention accorded this entire domain. One upshot has been that the conventional understanding of interruption, grounded in its onset and its outcome, does not fare well when juxtaposed with the data of what actually happens in the talk, and that social scientific work based on this notion is problematic. How then has it come to have the shape and character it has?

One possibility is that the unanalyzed incorporation of the vernacular action category "interruption" has imported into the proposed analyses a moral component that resonates with what early ethnomethodology termed "practical theorizing" and "commonsense knowledge," but which is incompatible with the "mere description" that conversation analytic inquiry aims at. The conjecture pursued here has been that the action category "interruption" has implicated associated categories of actors—agents and patients—who have populated and dominated the literature in this area. As a consequence, that literature has featured the social structural scaffolding for conduct rather more prominently than that "social action," with its "subjective meaning tak[ing] account of the behavior of others and ... thereby oriented in its course," which Weber (1978, p. 4) envisioned as being at the heart of sociology. The discipline that Weber envisioned but did not in fact pursue may now in fact be possible, whether it will be called "sociology" or something else.[41] Whatever contribution it may make in its own right, it may be useful to ask how much of the sociology of the past 100 years is to be understood, or reunderstood, by reference to the absence of appropriate resources for the study of social action in its most immediate contexts of occurrence and its consequent displacement to more distal categories of social structure. Has the time come to review the consequent, attenuated, indexical connections between social structure and social interaction?

The broader possibility embodied in this work invites collegial reflection. A very great

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lives where real "investments" may be mobilized at particular junctures in the talk, but if not there, in the talk already collected for such past studies as have talk-in-interaction that defensibly bears on these issues. Working with such materials may, however, make the alternative terms of analysis introduced here and in Schegloff (2000) more attractive.

[40]For another locus of this problem in social science, see Suchman and Jordan (1990).

[41]How ironic it would be if the delivery of "verstehende Soziologie" were to come from the once-despised "hippie sociology from California" (Gellner, 1975).

range of sociological theories and analytical stances takes the conduct held to compose the world of social life as the point of departure and return for their mandate and are grounded either explicitly or implicitly in some view of what that conduct is, in what terms it should be understood, what is or is not relevant in and about it, and what shapes and drives it. At bottom, almost all such views of what the conduct is are derived from the vernacular culture of the society and are assessed (if they are assessed at all) not by repeatable, direct, and detailed observation of such naturally occurring conduct, but by tighter or looser derivation of inferences which are then compared with data that are largely grounded in those same vernacular presuppositions.

Work of the sort presented here and especially in the companion paper on which this chapter draws offers the possibility of an alternative. Our notions of how social conduct is composed, shaped, driven, and so forth can now be made accessible to the constraint of direct observation. Some will not survive the challenge of meeting the constraint; some will be enhanced and specified by it. Much will have to be reformulated and recalibrated once significant numbers of workers begin to look—at this relevant level of detail—at the occurrences that compose most directly the observable stuff of the society.

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