

# Between Micro and Macro: Contexts and Other Connections

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## I.

When persons talk to each other in interaction, they ordinarily talk one at a time and one after the other. When their talk is not produced serially in this manner, they generally act quickly to restore “order”; someone quickly steps in to fill the silence; someone stops talking (or several someones do) to resolve the simultaneous talk; or if two or more of the participants continue talking, their talk takes on a special character of “competitiveness” (it is louder or higher pitched, for example). These special states of silence or competitiveness, however, are quickly resolved in favor of “normality,” one at a time, no more, no less.

I want to call whatever mechanism, device, or set of practices that produces these effects a form of social organization. What is organized by this organization is both a set of social actions (looked at in one way) and a set of actors (looked at in another way). Whatever else the participants may be doing—announcing, requesting, complaining, on one hand, and listening, displaying understanding, agreeing, on the other—they are constitutively realizing a course of action in their talking and listening. Although a turn at talk, or some smaller utterance unit within it, may have enacted through it a number of acts of the kind we conventionally call (after Austin and Searle) “speech acts,” the conduct of conversation (or, more generally, “talk-in-interaction”) itself represents a course of action. The participants who “bring it off,” whether by talking or by withholding talk at the “right” places and supplying it at others,

do so in their capacities as “prior speaker,” “current speaker,” “recipient,” and the like. The units (such as sentences) out of which such a course of action as “talking in a turn” is constructed are structures with describable, interactionally relevant properties. For example, their structure allows anticipation of their possible completion, the imminence of which can be detected by hearers, and used as grounds of contingent action. Accordingly, a possible next speaker can begin to gear up to talk as such projected possible completion comes “into view”; a current speaker can anticipate such a possibility and modify the manner of his or her talk so as to circumvent, ward off, or fight off such a start by another (e.g., by suddenly speeding up the talk, not pausing for a breath at the point of possible completion, but rushing ahead into a next sentence and pausing at a point of maximum grammatical control, such as after a preposition but before its object).<sup>1</sup> Coordination between actors is thus present, as are anticipation and modification of coordination. Although a single person seems to have talked, obviously the participants together have produced the bit of discourse, action, and interaction that has resulted.

What I have just described is a bit of the turn-taking organization for conversation<sup>2</sup>—that is, one aspect of a “speech exchange system.” Although it is not what sociologists ordinarily think of as “social organization,” in many ways it is the apotheosis of social organization. It operates in, and partly organizes, what would appear to be the primordial site of sociality: direct interaction between persons. It coordinates the behavior of the participants—*all* participants—by allocating differentially at any moment differing opportunities for differing types of participation. The types of participation are partly defined by different types of social acts—single or multiple instances of the empirical version of a basic social unit: the unit act. This bit of social organization is part of the medium, or the “enabling” institution, for a substantial proportion of the conduct of which all the other major social institutions are composed. Finally, as a coherent set of practices or rules, it is, or constitutes, a structure of action and thereby escapes the polarity of individual and aggregate.

The relationship we depict between micro- and macroanalysis (recognizing without further comment the utter relativity and likely hopelessness of these terms) may well reflect whether we start from the micro or macro end of the continuum, and it is likely to reflect as well the kind of microanalysis or macroanalysis on which we base our approach. I approach

the theme from what is ordinarily considered the micro end of the spectrum. Of the several kinds of microsociology now active—symbolic interactionist analysis, role theory of various types, exchange theory of various types, small group theory, status expectations theory, phenomenological analysis, and the like—I come to the topic from the active practice of “conversation(al) analysis” (CA for short).

It is not clear how the kind of microanalysis CA does (if it *is* microanalysis) is to be related to macro-level theorizing or whether it should be. This kind of work is concerned with understanding how courses of interaction come to have the detailed trajectory and character they do. This is accomplished in part by coming to understand how the recognizable social actions that participants enact are done and done recognizably.<sup>3</sup> This form of analysis takes seriously the relevance of the fact that the interactions we are examining were produced by the parties for one another and were designed, at least in part, by reference to a set of features of the interlocutors, the setting, and so on, that are relevant for the participants. The fact that these interactions are structured and progressively restructured by the participants' orientations does not serve (from this point of view) to make “objective” analysis irrelevant or impossible; it is precisely the *parties'* relevancies, orientations, and thereby-informed action which it is our interest to describe, and to describe under the control of the details of the interaction in which they are realized. It is what the action, interaction, field of action are to the *parties* that poses our task of analysis. One of our most insistent and recurrent findings is the so-called local character of the organization of interaction (that is, its turn-by-turn, sequence-by-sequence, episode-sensitive character), and this is one basis for the problems that arise in attempting to relate its analysis to so-called macro.

In what follows I shall take up three types of linkages between the micro and the macro proposed or embodied in recent literature. I shall consider them in the context of conversation and interaction analysis as a genre of microanalysis, in some cases focusing on the outcome of a macro-micro linkage and in other cases on the difficulties involved. I will then consider a kind of inversion of the way the issue is frequently posed, and sketch a different kind of treatment of the problem.

## II.

In this section I will examine one proposed form of the linkage between micro and macro: variation in microphenomena between cultures

or societies. I will begin by describing a domain of phenomena referred to in conversation analysis as the organization of "repair."<sup>4</sup> Only a brief account will be given here.

By "repair" we refer to efforts to deal with trouble in speaking, hearing, or understanding talk in interaction. "Trouble" includes such occurrences as misarticulations, malapropisms, use of a "wrong" word, unavailability of a word when needed, failure to hear or to be heard, trouble on the part of the recipient in understanding, incorrect understandings by recipients, and various others. Because anything in talk can be a source of trouble, everything in conversation is, in principle, "repairable." The actual behavior by which repair is effected, or at least undertaken, is socially and sequentially organized. The social organization of repair casts the parties to the conversation into one of two categories with respect to the possibility of repair: the speaker of the trouble-source (or "self," as we refer to him or her) and all others ("other"). Opportunities to repair, and activations of them, are distributed differentially between self and other. For example, the speaker of a turn in which trouble occurs has the initial opportunity to deal with that trouble in the same turn in which the trouble occurs; the initial opportunity is thus for "self-repair." The import of this is that others, who may well be able to effect the repair (e.g., they know the missing word, they know the speaker meant "buy" rather than "sell," etc.), withhold doing so while the current speaker (self) is still talking. Only after self has finished the turn at talk and has not repaired the repairable does some other address it.

Further, if one distinguishes between undertaking to repair something (i.e., *initiating* repair) on one hand and *solving or completing* it on the other, then another bit of social and sequential organization may be noted: Just as self has the first opportunity to initiate repair, so overwhelmingly does self (the producer of the trouble source) have the first opportunity to complete or solve it, even if an other initiated the repair. That is, when self has not initiated repair and an other has then done so, generally other merely initiates the process and, in the first instance, leaves it to the speaker to do the actual repair. There is, then, a kind of division of labor and prerogatives.

The distinction between self and other discriminates as well between the forms of talk used by the several parties in doing the work of repair and the characteristic trajectories the talk follows until successful resolution of the trouble (or, very rarely, failure) has occurred. Thus "same-turn self-repair" is characteristically initiated by an abrupt self-interrup-

tion, a disjunction marked by cutting off a word in progress followed by an effort to deal with the trouble. Repair initiated by some other ordinarily takes the form of a whole turn in which one of a limited set of question constructs ("huh?"; "who?"; partial repetitions of prior turn, etc.) is used to give some indication of what the trouble was in the preceding turn. There are additional positions from which repair can be initiated, additional resources for doing so, and considerable interactional import attached to the whole matter. For example, repair is a major resource in maintaining and restoring intersubjectivity or mutual understanding in interaction, and it supplies a major vehicle for both the expression and the circumvention of disagreement and, with it, conflict. These are not central to my purpose here, however.

What is striking is the apparent constancy of this organized domain of behavior to a fine level of detail across variations in the most macro contexts with which social scientists ordinarily deal. I will cite three instances to depict both this constancy and the striking way in which such variations as are found are neatly adapted to special features of the macrocontext.

First, there is the report by Moerman<sup>5</sup> on materials gathered by recording in peasant villages in Thailand. The macrounit in this case is a society with a history and a national social structure quite different from those of the United States; a more local (though still macro?) social structure of a peasant village that is no less strikingly different from the variety of "local contexts" in the United States from which the data were collected on which the original accounts of repair were based (which range from urban ghettos to middle-class suburbs to rural exurbs); a culture and value system drawn from sharply different origins; and a language genetically and structurally unrelated to English. Moerman reports (and shows) that where his corpus contains adequate materials, repair in Thai conversation is well described, and in detail, by the account developed on American materials.

A second report is by Besnier,<sup>6</sup> who studied conversational interaction in Tuvaluan, a language spoken by a society of some 400 persons on an island in the South Pacific. Besnier describes and documents a remarkable similarity between the organization of repair in that locale and what has been described for the United States. One minor divergence from the U.S. materials is of interest, however, and relates in an interesting way to a claim about the ethnopsychology and ethnoepistemology of the South Pacific, as described by Ochs.<sup>7</sup> Ochs and others<sup>8</sup> claim (in the first instance about Samoa but also about other South Pacific cultures) that the

Western notion of "intention" plays a substantially weaker role there. Further, members of Samoan and other cultures who hold this view do not believe one can (or ought to) guess explicitly another's intentions. This view is derived from ethnographic inquiry.

Consider the relationship of this claim to the following observation about conversational behavior. In Besnier's display of the range of types of initiation and completion of repair in Tuvaluan conversation, he depicts the following type of occurrence. A speaker produces a turn to a point just before completion—for example, to just before a projected last word. She then pauses. In the cases Besnier reproduces, and others he describes, the recipient of that (uncompleted) turn then uses a form commonly used elsewhere when recipients of talk with trouble in it initiate repair: a partial repeat (in this case, of the last word or two before the silence set in) plus a question ("who?" "what?" "where?" etc.) of the type appropriate for the type of word that has been "withheld." The prior speaker then supplies the missing word as a solution to the repair initiator. In American (and other) materials, such talk, in which a speaker hesitates just before what is potentially the last word, is sometimes met by the recipient supplying a candidate last word for the incomplete turn (sometimes with "question" intonation), which the prior speaker may accept or reject.<sup>9</sup> When asked if this type of response occurs in Tuvaluan as an alternative to the partial repeat plus question word, Besnier reports (personal communication) that it does not.

Note that this divergence between American and Tuvaluan practice fits nicely with the claim that these South Pacific peoples do not believe in guessing the intentions of others; the practice used by other societies or cultures, but not by them, involves explicitly just such guessing.<sup>10</sup> In respects other than this, however, the organization of repair among the 400 inhabitants of this South Pacific island is just like that in societies of wholly different character.

A third case comes from fieldwork by Irene Daden among the Quiche-speaking Indian peasants of the Guatemalan highlands.<sup>11</sup> As was noted earlier, in the general discussion of repair, the initial opportunity to deal with trouble is afforded the speaker of the trouble-source, in the same turn at talk as the one in which the trouble occurred. This may then be referred to as "same-turn, self-initiated repair." Speakers begin such repair with a "repair initiator." A repair initiator alerts the recipient to the possibility that what will follow in turn may not be a continuation of the preceding talk but, rather, may be disjunctive with it; it may restart the turn, or replace a word just used, or make some other such change in the prior talk rather than continuing it.

The most common same-turn repair initiator in English and in other European languages is what we call a "cutoff," what linguists call a "stop" (most commonly, a glottal stop). This involves a sudden stop of the speech stream, or self-interruption. It should be noted that this stop has no semantic sense in Continental European languages and English; nor does it affect meaning. It is, as the linguists say, not "phonemic" in English. *It is, however, phonemic in Quiche. Therefore it is not surprising that Daden reports that Quiche speakers do not use the cutoff or stop as a same-turn repair initiator. When English speakers do not use a stop, they often use a sound stretch; they prolong some sound in a word they are producing and then proceed to the repair. Like cutoffs, sound stretches are not phonemic in English. However, brief sound stretches are phonemic in Quiche. They are not used as same-turn repair initiators in Quiche. Quiche speakers do primarily use overlong sound stretches (which are not phonemic for them) to initiate same-turn repair.*

Several points should be noted. First, "same-turn repair initiation" is a kind of occurrence and a locus of action only by reference to this theoretical account of an organization of repair in conversation. When this account is used to examine conversational behavior in radically different social, cultural, and linguistic contexts, it proves in each of them to be a locus of systematic action. Second, there is some variation in how the action is achieved, but the variation is extraordinarily minor relative to the constancies that make it observable in the first instance. Third, the differences between Quiche and other cultures with respect to repair seem to be designed precisely for the host language and its phonological structure.

To summarize this part of the discussion, I have described a type of social organization of behavior, the organization of repair. This is *social* in many respects: It allocates rights among classes of persons; it accords the status of action types to determinate bits of behavior; and it is an important ingredient in other fundamental types of organization in interaction—most notably the organization of agreement and disagreement and thus of the embryo of conflict. We have in hand a detailed description of the resources deployed in this bit of organization and the placement and nature of these deployments. This "microdomain" shows extraordinary invariance across massive variations in social structural, cultural, and linguistic context and relatively minor variations fitted to those variations in context.

The finding that the phenomena of repair may not vary substantially by society, culture, or language does not make them not social or their study nonsociological. There is a tendency under such circumstances to

think of invariants as universal categories or properties or capacities of mind. It should be clear, however, that we are dealing with matters of *conduct* and of *conduct in interaction*. There is temporal and sequential organization between actors and types of actors, actions and types of actions. Options, practices, and rules for ordering them are involved. They are addressed to plausibly generic organizational exigencies of interaction. Should we not expect in the first instance not variation but invariance in this domain and other such domains?

### III.

In the previous section I considered one mode of relating micro and macro levels: possible variation in the former by reference to the latter. Next I will examine a second mode of relating the two: examining the operation of microprocesses (in interaction, for example) when participants are involved who display variation on attributes considered to be relevant at the macro level—most commonly class, ethnicity, and gender. From a substantial literature I have selected one line of research in particular because of its intersection with some work of my own which allows me technical access to its details. The problems I seek to address are quite general, however, and by no means are specific to these inquiries or these investigators. The work I will discuss is concerned with some aspects of the organization of turn-taking in conversation with respect to gender relations, and in particular the much-cited work of West and Zimmerman on the study of interruption—a phenomenon transparently a by-product of turn-taking organization (though not exclusively so, as there are units other than turns at talk which can be interrupted).<sup>12</sup>

A particularly well-known finding has been the reported asymmetry of interruption between the sexes—men interrupting women far more frequently than the opposite. When furnished with an appropriate definition or account of interruption (such as “talk by another when a prior speaker is still talking and is not ‘in the vicinity’ of possible turn completion”), this finding aims to link an asymmetrical outcome in the talk to differential attributes of the participants of a macrorelevant type. What is commonly seen as differential between men and women in a finding such as this (as in findings of this kind concerning other mixed conversational pairings, such as professional/client) is differential status or power, of which the interruptions are presumed to be a symbol and for which they are a vehicle.

Such findings, and the research strategy of which they are a product,



however attractive for their policy implications, present certain problems. One concerns the need in this type of analytic enterprise to show that characterizations the investigator makes of the participants are grounded in the participants' own orientations in the interaction.<sup>13</sup> This is not at all clear (except, perhaps, statistically) for the characterization of the participants in gender terms in this research tradition (or in class, ethnic, or other such terms in cognate research traditions). Second, the differential attributes are not conversation-specific in any straightforward way. That is, these identifications of the participants are not analytically linked to specific conversational mechanisms by which the outcomes might be produced; however relevant to the macroconcerns that motivate their use, they risk being arbitrary in their relation to the interactional events they are invoked to account for. Indeed, the most serious problem is that early introduction of such linkages to macro-level variables (and, with them, to a compelling political/vernacular relevance) tends to preempt full technical exploration of the aspects of interaction being accounted for and the micro-level mechanisms that are involved in their production. There is a potential for analytic losses at both the micro and macro levels. Let me illustrate with the case of gender differences in interruption.

Technically, occurrences in which a woman is speaking and a man (in the middle of her talk) says "But-" or "Bu-" or "B-" (where "-" is a mark of self-interruption or cutoff) are all interruptions. They are not, however, the kind of event central to the finding that men disproportionately interrupt women. The prototype occurrence for that finding is one in which a woman is talking, a man starts in the middle of her talk and continues talking until the woman withdraws before finishing what she was saying. If this is so, then we must recognize that there is a stretch of time in which both parties are talking at the same time, and we can ask whether there is some order or organization to the several speakers' conduct when there is simultaneous talk and, if so, whether or not that order might be relevant to the outcome. There *is* a systematic organization to the talk produced by more than one speaker talking at the same time.

Without entering into a technical elaboration and without specifying those occasions of simultaneous talk which are exempt from this organization, I can briefly mention some of these mechanisms. There are several forms of talk by which speakers show that they will not withdraw from the "overlap," such as increased volume or pitch or repeating parts of the turn. Each party to the overlap can activate these forms, and each

can react to the other's use of these forms—ordinarily in the next beat or syllable after the other's introduction of one of them. One type of response to the other's continuation at talking or deployment of these forms of "competitive" speaking is to drop out of the overlap and yield the turn to the other—at least for the moment. Another response type is to continue in the face of the competition, and perhaps even to become competitive (or more competitive) oneself.

There is much more to the organization of overlapping talk than this, but the foregoing should provide sufficient background to note that the resolution of an overlap is, in the first instance, not determined or effectuated by the attributes of the parties; otherwise the outcome of an interruption would be entirely determined at its beginning. The resolution is arrived at by the conduct of the parties during a stretch of talk in which both speak simultaneously, during which each does or does not deploy resources of competitive talk such as raising the voice, and during which each has responded to the deployment of such resources by dropping out, by holding firm, or by upping the competitive "ante" in return. It may well be that women are interrupted more than they interrupt, but the introduction of such an "external" attribute early in the research process or the account can deflect attention from how the outcome of the conversational course of action is determined *in its course, in real time*. Once this process has been explicated, much of the interest it had may well have been "secularized" and appear anonymous rather than gender-specific.

Once again, what is needed is the capacity to specify technically the parameters of the relevant organization of action or interaction through which macroattributes have whatever different effects they have, if any. In the case of interruption, one may well be able to describe differential courses of action (e.g., in invoking competitive resources or in responding to them) that systematically make it likely that this one or that one will "lose." Whether gender per se will turn out to be a macro-relevant attribute relating to these is not clear.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it is one "proxy" for high/low power or status. Indeed, such differences may come to embody for some investigators what high/low status amounts to interactionally, although establishing the relationship to external status (as measured by noninteractional measures) may be quite problematic. For understanding interaction it is the former (the "intrainteractional"), not the latter, that is consequential, and it is not necessarily tied directly to macro-level phenomena. (For example, it appears from published stenographic tran-

scripts that former President Richard Nixon regularly yielded to aides John Ehrlichman and Robert Haldemann when they found themselves talking simultaneously, although their "external" status would have predicted the opposite outcome.)

It should be obvious that some cases of competitive simultaneous talk involve matters other than status or power tests altogether. There are, for example, some types of utterance that require a particular turn position to get done; wisecracks, for example, must be done in the turn following the one that touched them off and with which they play. Other turn types, most notably efforts to address troubles in hearing or understanding the preceding talk, also appear to take priority over competing talk. The developing turn of a speaker who persists in competitive overlap can thus reveal the activity being prosecuted through the turn as the basis for its speaker's persistence, and this, rather than power-related matters, can be the basis for another party's withdrawal.

More consequentially, aside from the several alternatives to status/power as accounts for persistence to survival, there are at least three other criteria of success in competitive talk besides the survival (or outlasting the other) criterion implicit in the preceding discussion. The most important of these is that one's own turn be the one to which ensuing talk is addressed. Success by this criterion can be of greater consequence to the further course of the talk, is by no means guaranteed by survival in overlap, and may be enhanced by quite different modes of conduct in overlap than are relevant to survival.<sup>15</sup> These important aspects of the study of the organization of simultaneous talk as part of the study of turn-taking have a way of being preempted when the research focus turns early to relating aspects of this organization of talk to macro-relevant variables.

The issue is, of course, a general one and by no means limited to the particular research enterprise through which I have tried to explore it. All kinds of conversational, linguistic, so-called nonverbal, and other interactional behavior have been related to such classical dimensions of social organization as class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Although one may choose to proceed along the lines of such a strategy in order to focus on important aspects of social structure in a traditional sociological sense, the risks of underspecification of the interactional phenomena should be made explicit, and with them the risks of missing the opportunity to transform our traditional understanding of what is important in social structure. Although the trade-off may be made in order to ben-

efit important sociological or sociopolitical concerns, even these concerns may suffer if the interactional phenomena are not completely explored on a technical basis.

#### IV.

A third type of proposal for relating micro to macro levels is that they be mediated by one of a class of bridging notions collected under the rubric "context." "Context" is sometimes taken to refer to the matters examined in the previous sections of this essay: cultural/societal context and the context of interactional participants of a certain type or types. (Much of the following discussion may therefore be relevant to that of the prior sections as well.) Additionally, however, some have proposed contexts of a scope intermediate between the largest structures of a society and the details of interaction—"contexts of the middle range," one might call them. Prototypical here are institutional and/or organizational contexts<sup>16</sup> such as "bureaucratic," "medical," "legal," "classroom," "formal," and the like, or by characterizations of the activity to be done (e.g., "getting-acquainted conversation," "task-oriented group," etc.) or the relationship of the participants (e.g., "conversation between strangers").

My concern about this tack is that it raises the familiar problem of multiple description. The set of ways of describing any setting is indefinitely expandable. Consequently the correctness of any particular characterization is by itself not adequate warrant for its use; some kind of "relevance rule" or "relevancing procedure" must be given to warrant a particular characterization. Here I must vastly oversimplify by suggesting that there are two main types of solution. One is the positivistic one (in one of the many contemporary uses of that term): Any description the investigator chooses is warranted if it yields "results," statistically significant or otherwise attested, with the further possible proviso that these results be theoretically interpretable. The second type of solution requires for the relevance of some characterization *by the investigator* some evidence of its *relevance to the participants* in the setting characterized; that is, reference is made to the intrinsic or internal ordering and relevance assertedly involved with sentient, intentional actors. We are operating with the second of these positions, and it is therefore required that we be able to warrant any characterization of the parties or setting by showing that it is relevant to the parties, and relevant to them at the

time of the occurrence of what we are claiming is related to them or contingent on them.

For example, Sacks<sup>17</sup> showed a number of years ago that there is no general unique solution to the problem of how relevantly to characterize a member of society, and I tried to show<sup>18</sup> that formulating place is also a matter contingent on various interactional features. Those papers were concerned to show how the terms used by *conversational participants* reflected the facets of the situation and action that the parties were treating as relevant. Those "internal to the setting" relevancies then serve as constraints on an *investigator's* characterization of the setting.

So the fact that a conversation takes place in a hospital does not ipso facto make technically relevant a characterization of the setting, for a conversation there, as "in a hospital" (or "in the hospital"); it is the talk of the parties that reveals, in the first instance *for them*, whether or when the "setting in a/the hospital" is relevant (as compared to "at work," "on the east side," "out of town," etc.). Nor does the fact that the topic of the talk is medical ipso facto render the "hospital setting" relevant to the talk at any given moment. Much the same point bears on the characterization of the participants: For example, the fact that they are "in fact" respectively a doctor and a patient does not make those characterizations ipso facto relevant (as is especially clear when the patient is also a doctor); their respective ages, sex, religions, and so on, or altogether idiosyncratic and ephemeral attributes (for example, "the one who just tipped over the glass of water on the table") may be what is relevant at any point in the talk. On the other hand, pointed use of a technical or vernacular idiom (e.g., of "hematoma" as compared to "bruise") may display the relevance to the parties of precisely that aspect of their interaction together. It is not, then, that some context independently selected as relevant affects the interaction in some way. Rather, in an interaction's moment-to-moment development, the parties, singly and together, select and display in their conduct which of the indefinitely many aspects of context they are making relevant, or are invoking, for the immediate moment.<sup>19</sup>

One additional constraint needs to be mentioned: that relevant contexts should be procedurally related to the talk said to be contingently related to them. That is, there should be some tie between the context-as-characterized and its bearing on "the doing of the talk" or "doing the interaction." Curiously, then, although it may be problematic to warrant "in a hospital" as a formulation of context, or "doctor/patient" as an

identification of the participants, it may be relatively straightforward to warrant "two-party conversation," or "on the telephone" as contexts and "caller/called" as identifications of the participants. Because they are procedurally related to the doing of the talk, evidence of orientation to them ordinarily is readily available.

To suggest, however, that warranting the invocation of vernacular characterizations of context is problematic is not to say it is impossible. Rather, I mean to direct attention to the need for examining the details of the talk and other behavior of the participants to discern whether and how it displays (in the first instance to coparticipants but also to professional analysts) an orientation to context formulated in some particular fashion. The literature includes a number of efforts along these lines.<sup>20</sup> An indication of one line worth trying might be the following.

Take the observation that "physicians routinely . . . ask questions, and patients routinely provide responses."<sup>21</sup> Rather than treating this as the observation that persons independently formulated as physicians disproportionately engage in a particular form of conduct, one might ask whether these persons can be "doing being doctor" by conducting themselves in a particular way. One is then directed to close examination of the conduct in order to specify in what respects it might constitute "doing, and displaying doing, doctor." One might note that constructing turns as questions is one part of "doing being doctor," and one might be drawn into further specifying aspects of the talk (e.g., the type of question, the manner of the asking, the manner of doing reciprocity of the response, etc.) as parts of this process—if, that is, there are such specifiable aspects. If there are, then attacking the problem in this fashion allows a claim of the participants' orientation to the "doctor/patient"-ness of the interaction, rather than the more positivistic correlation of a type of activity with an independently given (but not demonstrably party-relevant) characterization of the parties.

The point, then, is not merely to impose a formal (or formalistic) constraint on the use of certain forms of description, but to be led by such a constraint to a new direction of analysis, with the promise of additional, and possibly distinctive, findings. I have sketched one such possible direction for the characterization of the participants in interaction, but this does not have a readily apparent application to the characterization of "context."

Let me suggest an alternative. Rather than treating the detailed course of conversation and interaction as micro-level phenomena, which invite

connection to macro levels of analysis through intervening contexts vernacularly characterized as earlier described, *modes of interactional organization might themselves be treated as contexts*. Indeed, it is ironic to find some critics insistently taking conversation analysis to task for not setting its findings into context or for not incorporating context into its inquiries.<sup>22</sup> For much of this work can be viewed as an extended effort to elaborate just what a context is and what its explication or description might entail. In the great surge of studies in a number of the social sciences (but particularly in anthropology,<sup>23</sup> linguistics,<sup>24</sup> and sociology<sup>25</sup>) beginning in the early 1960s which was concerned to (re-)assert and elaborate the importance of variation, social setting, and context, one frequently saw references to “the different meaning some sentence or action would have ‘in the context of an academic lecture’ as compared to ‘the context of ordinary conversation.’” These “contexts” were treated as transparent; everyone would know what those different contexts were and how they would affect the meaning of something said or done in their course. Of course, that transparency is merely apparent. What constitutes ordinary conversation as a context, and how it lends the character or “accent” it does to actions and utterances produced in its course, for some of us has been a matter for empirical inquiry and sustained analysis.

Given limitations of space, I cannot give a full characterization of “ordinary conversation” as a speech exchange system, and thereby as a type of context for social action.<sup>26</sup> A speech exchange system is specified by the form of organized solutions it has to such generic problems as managing the allocation and size of turns among the parties, providing for the organized production of stretches of talk into coherent sequences and courses of action (sometimes organizing successive utterances, sometimes dispersed ones, for example), furnishing orderly means for dealing with troubles of speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk so as to allow the action to proceed there and then, providing orderly procedures for the starting and ending of episodes of concerted interactional activity, and the like. Speech exchange systems vary in these terms; differing organization in some respects often implicates other differences. (For example, the different turn-taking systems underlying “conversation” and “formal meetings,” respectively, can implicate differences in the organization of sequences; differences between “conversation” and “ceremonies” appear to implicate differences in the organization of repair; etc.) *In this essay I can give only a brief illustration of how speech exchange systems can be seen to furnish relevant and procedurally con-*

sequential contexts for a range of different activity types. I will do so by elaborating a bit on comparative speech exchange systems.

As noted earlier, one basic aspect of speech exchange system variation is in turn-taking systems. So, for example, in ordinary conversation determination of both who shall speak next and when that one should speak (i.e., when current turn should end) is accomplished in a local, turn-by-turn manner and not by some predetermined pattern. In contrast, many meetings preallocate every other turn to the chairperson and give to the chairperson the power to allocate, in those turns, who shall have rights to speak in the others. Many ceremonies, rituals, and formal debates, on the other hand, may fully specify the order and length of all turns, being thereby at the opposite end of the "local allocation" versus "preallocation" spectrum. In general it appears that other speech exchange systems, and their turn-taking organizations, are the product of transformations or modifications of the one for conversation, which is the primordial organization for talk-in-interaction. Below I sketch some aspects of a turn-taking system that organizes a substantial range of activities in very different vernacularly conceived contexts as an exploration of an alternative, more technically specified version of this notion. Note that this brief description is not based on the same amount of data and analysis as that on which our understanding of conversation is based; therefore it is rough and to be used only for illustrative purposes.

Consider, then, such diverse occasions as classrooms<sup>27</sup> of a "traditional" kind (at least in the United States) and presidential press conferences.<sup>28</sup> In cases of both types of event, quite a few persons are present, most of them as official participants; 20 to 30 in the classroom situation, as many as 200 or more in the case of the press conference. For turn-taking purposes, however, it is important to note that they are organized as two-party speech exchange systems. In each case one of the parties has one incumbent or member (the teacher, the president) and the other party (the students, the press corps) has many. In both cases turns are distributed as they generally are in two-party turn-taking systems: They alternate between the parties. It is this alternation, and the consequent exclusion of another reporter as next speaker after a current speaker-reporter, which makes clear that those are *two-party* interactions, even though *multiperson*.

In both cases the speech exchange system is designed to organize particular types of utterance or actions—questioning and answering. In the case of the classroom it is the one-person party (the teacher) who does the questioning and the multiperson party who does the answering. In



the press conference the multiperson party (the press corps) does the questioning and the one-person party (the president) does the answering.

Similar "devices" are used to select which of the persons who compose the multiperson party shall speak for that party when it is that party's turn. In the classroom situation the teacher produces a question and allows a set of candidate-next-speakers to be assembled. Some students signify self-nomination into the candidacy pool by raising their hands. The teacher may wait and encourage more students to enter the pool (for example, by seeking them out by eye contact); the students may try to avoid this prodding by averting their eyes, by suggesting that they are "working on the problem," by assuming preoccupied, studious, puzzled faces, and the like. At some point the teacher selects someone from among the students to speak, usually (but not always) from the candidacy pool. The duration of the turn thereby assigned is primarily determined by the teacher, who can continue looking expectantly at the student after the apparent possible completion of the "answer" turn, or can begin talking at a possible completion point even if it appears that the student is prepared to go on. The teacher may then solicit additional answering talk from other students, and the selection process may repeat. After each answer or answer part the teacher may offer an assessment of that answer before soliciting more, or before beginning another cycle by taking a next turn to do either another question or "telling" talk. Various other behaviors occur simultaneous with all of this, of course, but a great deal of it is structured by reference to this organization. (An example is other students monitoring the "answer" a called-upon student is giving and shooting their hands into the air as early as possible after a possible error or after possible closure that has not exhausted the possible answer; but such behavior is obviously attuned to, and attempting to preempt, the turn-taking system as otherwise described.)

In the case of the press conference, when the president is ready to take questions (after an initial statement or round of greetings), it is so announced. Members of the press corps then self-nominate into a candidacy pool by hand-raising and by other behavior (to be discussed later). The president selects one of them to ask a question, then addresses himself (ostensibly) to the question. Unlike the classroom case, here the answerer *does* determine (for the purposes of organizing the occasion of the talk) when the answer is complete. Under one form of organization (variations to be discussed later), as soon as the reporters hear the president coming to a possible completion of the response, they prepare to raise their hands to enter the candidacy pool at the earliest possible

nonoverlapping point (e.g., on the last syllable). Once again the president selects which of the reporters will get that party's next turn. Because the answerer, rather than the questioner, has determined what will be treated as an adequate answer, and because of the way this turn-taking system operates to produce a flurry of candidacies for next speaker, the prior questioner does not get the opportunity to pursue the answer with a "follow-up" question. It is then up to the next reporter selected, who undoubtedly has a prepared question to ask, to decide (without consultation with others, for there is no time) whether to use the turn to follow up on the preceding question-answer exchange, or to ask the prepared question. The issue, then, is one of achieving a concerted course of action by a party whose incumbents cannot coordinate their activities in any explicit way. When a next question has been asked the cycle continues.

Consider the following additional points. When Ronald Reagan took office, he and his staff experimented with several changes in the organization of press conferences. The first changes were introduced, so it was said, in the interests of decorum. It was thought unseemly for reporters to be leaping from their seats, waving their hands in the air, and calling out "Mr. President," often while the president was finishing a response. Therefore the practice was changed; the press corps were requested to raise their hands quietly; no calling out, no standing up, no waving of arms. These changes are obviously cosmetic: they are not structural or organizational but affect only the signs by which bids for speakership are displayed.

For the next press conference different changes were introduced. This time, all members of the press corps were assigned numbers, and well in advance of the actual press conference numbers were drawn at random, thereby fixing both the identities of the question askers and the order in which they would ask their questions. That is, the system was changed from one in which half the turns were preallocated to a one-person party, who in turn chose turn by turn who would speak for the other party, to a system with full preallocation of next-speaker identities (though not of turn size and not fully of turn allocation because, as we shall see, under this system follow-up questions became possible—that is, additional turns for the same speaker from the press corps).

This change *was* organizational and it did yield different outcomes. For example, under the old system, as the president would be finishing a turn a clamor would start up, bidding for his attention, and his eyes would sweep the room scanning through the waving arms. He would not, as speakers otherwise often do, return his eyes at the end of the

utterance to the one whose question had prompted the response. This was the physical vehicle for the blockage of follow-up questions. At the first press conference with the new organizing format, President Reagan at first forgot the change; as he ended his response to the first question, he began sweeping the room with his eyes, looking momentarily puzzled at the absence of waving arms bidding for his attention. Then he remembered, remarked at having forgotten the change, and consulted a note on the podium on which were listed the names of the questioners in order. He called the next questioner. As he finished his answer to the second question, his eyes returned to the questioner who was still standing, "receiving the answer." This momentary mutual gaze opened the possibility for a further question, and the reporter grasped the opportunity, asked a follow-up question, and got another answer. Later in the same press conference another reporter asked a pointed question, which the President answered in a guarded and hesitant manner. What was striking was that as he brought his answer to a close, he visibly withheld his glance from returning to the still standing reporter, looked instead at the list on the podium, and with hardly a breath after his answer's completion called out the name of the next questioner. The avoidance of follow-up was no longer ensured by the turn-taking organization of the talk; instead, it was revealed as a forcibly achieved, and nakedly apparent, evasion. Future press conferences returned to the former format. Note that the turn-taking system in effect can have, in these and many other and deeper respects, important consequences not only for the sequential organization of the talk and other aspects of interactional form (which are, of course, of central importance to the formal sociology here); it can also (and thereby) affect the substance of what gets talked about and how.

I have meant in the preceding discussion to illustrate the notion of speech exchange system as context by describing several seemingly different activities in speech-exchange-system context terms and to suggest some of their similarities and, in the framework, some of their differences. I then explored some organizational variations within one of these formats—the press conference—emerging with a suggestion of some ways in which the substance of the talk can be affected. Among this system's practices are the following: the organization of a multiperson setting by a two-party format; a one-person party and a multiperson party; single-person party selects speaker for multiperson party from self-assembled candidate pool; the set of practices organizes limited action-type interaction, ordinarily a colloquy of move (such as question)

and response (such as answer), though not restricting assignment of the action types between the party types. A substantial part of the conduct of vernacularly different occasions, such as the press conference and the classroom, is organized by some such device. Two points are central. First, these ways of formulating context are procedurally relevant; they directly implicate sequential conduct of the interaction. Second, in the very ways in which the parties organize distribution of their participation, they exhibit their orientation to, and constitute the reality of, their contexts so understood.

The effects of different turn-taking practices on the character of interaction, and on the substance of what gets talked about in interaction, may be appreciated by considering the discussion periods following the papers at the conference on which this book is based (and many others). For the first several papers, the chair of the session called on persons who requested the floor, and after each had asked a question or offered a comment, the floor reverted to the presenter of the paper for a response. This format encouraged the development of a "colloquy," an extended exchange of remarks between the presenter and one other person, after which such a colloquy might develop with another member of the audience. Because each person invited to participate sustained an extended exchange with the deliverer of the paper, however, relatively few persons from the audience were able to participate.

After the first several papers, the chairs of the sessions adopted another practice (whether at the suggestion of the conference organizers or spontaneously I do not know). Rather than allowing the speaker to respond to each question or comment after it was put forward from the audience, a number of questions or comments were collected and the speaker was then asked to respond to them in turn. The effect of this practice was to limit the interaction with each audience member to a single exchange—for example, to a single question and its answer. For unlike the earlier format, the response by the speaker was not followed by a search for another intervention from the floor—a search that could find the prior questioner for a follow-up. A response by the speaker was followed by the speaker consulting his notes to find the next intervention to which a response was in order. Only in a few cases did the participant whose intervention had just been addressed forcibly seek to retake the floor to follow up the response. In some cases this effort succeeded, but only after having produced an atmosphere of contentiousness (not always warranted by the substance of the exchange); in other cases it failed, some-

times being suppressed by the chair, enforcing the procedures that had been adopted.

What differs between these two forms of turn-taking practices is not only the mechanism by which opportunities to participate were distributed, and the relative concentration or dispersion of these opportunities among more or fewer participants. The character of the talk, the topics likely touched on, the depth of pursuit of particular topics (that is, the substance of the matters under discussion) are also involved.

Consider the different contingencies each of these arrangements makes more or less likely, the substantive stances it makes sense for a participant to make explicit or to inhibit—that is, the direction the discussion may substantively take. Especially for nonpresenters, certain stances vis-à-vis some presentation will not be interactionally feasible (or will entail substantial reputational costs) because of the access to the floor and the length of speaking turn they require, and the impossibility or unsuitability of accomplishing those floor requirements in these interactional circumstances. Indeed, such considerations inform the expectations of those who attend such affairs about what can be realistically expected from them and what cannot; or, rather than “what cannot,” what can occur only between formal sessions (or in the discussion participants may arrange for the future to follow up contacts made here) in which a different speech exchange system can operate. Just as interactional context can demonstrably control what participants in conversation think to say, stories they are reminded of, and the like, so it is likely that the points participants make in the conference sessions are the survivors of an interactional process that cuts more deeply than seeing that some critique that has come to mind cannot be pursued under these circumstances. It is likely to constrain what comes to mind in the first place. Thinking afterward of what one might have said is not simply a matter of lacking social wit.

Finally, this bears in another way on the micro/macro issue. About ten years ago, in offering some comments on the import of the model of turn-taking we were then presenting, we wrote:

Turns are valued, sought, or avoided. The social organization of turn-taking distributes turns among parties. It must, at least partially, be shaped as an economy. As such, it is expectable that, like other economies, its organization will affect the relative distribution of that which it organizes. Until we unravel its organization, we shall not know what those effects consist of, and where they will turn up. But since all sorts of scientific and applied research use

conversation now, they all employ an instrument whose effects are not known. This is perhaps unnecessary.<sup>29</sup>

If such conferences as this, conversations among colleagues and work sessions and seminars with students, as well as survey and demographic interviews and talk in the course of fieldwork are important shapers of the content of a body of knowledge, and if they are in turn shaped and constrained by the turn-taking systems in effect in those activities, then the body of knowledge is being "effected" by conversational practices. How, then, shall we think of such a body of knowledge? As a product or element of macrostructure? Of microstructure? How does it matter?

## V.

The predominant thrust of the social sciences in the direction of variation and comparative analysis leads those committed to that stance to be unsatisfied by any "unitarian" analysis. From their point of view, until some "depth" is achieved by determining how some described phenomenon differs in different social classes and cultural settings, or under different work conditions, until the historical circumstances under which some practice arose are made explicit, yielding a comparative understanding for its basis, unless the social structural circumstances are described under which some phenomenon waxes or wanes, there is no satisfaction; there is no stable, even if temporary, intellectual resting place. This stance drives every apparently unitary analysis to find some variation. On the other side is the stance that finds in every discovered variation the challenge to find and articulate some yet more general account that allows the variants to find an appropriate place under its umbrella. These contradictory and potentially complementary impulses do not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of macro and micro or their possible relationship. Still, at present there does appear to be an elective affinity between macro-micro integrationists and variationism on one hand and those who rest comfortably without such integration and unitarianism on the other. It is the latter which is the minority position, and it would be salutary if its message were better received.

When conversation analysis points to various features of talk-in-interaction and proposes that together they evidence the operation of a systematic solution to certain general organizational problems of interaction, one response is to propose that these are not the interesting facts about conversation; they are so common as to be obvious and, being common and obvious, are not relevant. It is what differs by class, ethnic-

ity, culture, gender, institutional setting, organizational context, and so on that is interesting. The impression is thereby fostered that it is only by its linkage to macro themes that microanalysis becomes “respectable” and finds its *raison d'être*.

One can argue to the contrary, however, that any discipline that takes the understanding of human action as its goal must be answerable to such microanalysis as seems to offer a rigorous account of the details of social action *in its own terms*. Ideally such microanalysis will involve a capacity to yield effective and informative analysis of the details of actual, singular episodes or courses of action and interaction. Such a “single-case-competent” analytic apparatus should provide a proximate, or first-order, account of determinate episodes of interaction on one hand and, on the other hand, should provide a “hook” or “receptacle” for linkage with other theories at other levels. The nature of the linkage of other levels of analysis to that account will be shaped and constrained to an important extent by its characteristics, as may be the very terms in which other levels of analysis may themselves be couched. Compatibility with the terms of a microanalysis adequate to the details of singular bits of interaction is a (perhaps *the*) major constraint on articulation with other orders of theorizing.

The upshot of these considerations is that at least some of the favored contemporary ways of relating macro to micro levels of analysis are problematic. Efforts to link to the level of culture and society in the search for variation are unassured of success and uncertain in motive. Efforts to relate levels of analysis via macro-relevant attributes of the participants in micro-level processes threaten underdevelopment of a full technical exploration of the micro-level processes. Efforts to bridge the levels by the use of vernacular conceptions of context are vulnerable to challenges to the adequacy of their warrant and to the directness of their linkage to details of the actual conduct of interaction. I have tried to suggest one direction in which a solution might be found, at least with respect to the last of these tacks; it challenges us to replace vernacular formulations of context with technical ones—where, however, the “technical” may do better at capturing the real relevancies for participants than do the vernacular. How far this will take us, and whether now is the time to be taking this path, is not entirely clear. The issue in the end is not what the traditions and current tendencies of our disciplines ask of us but the integrity of our materials—what is necessary to come to terms effectively with the details of the lives in interaction of which the ordinary society is so largely fashioned.

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## NOTES

1. Emanuel A. Schegloff, "Discourse as an Interactional Achievement: Some Uses of 'Uh Huh' and Other Things That Come Between Sentences," in Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics, Deborah Tannen, ed., *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1981).

2. Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turntaking for Conversation," *Language* 50 (1974): 696-735.

3. Harvey Sacks, "On the Analyzability of Stories by Children," in John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes, eds., *Directions in Sociolinguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), p. 332.

4. Emanuel A. Schegloff, Gail Jefferson, and Harvey Sacks, "The Preference for Self-Correction in the Organization of Repair in Conversation," *Language* 53 (1977): 361-383.

5. Michael Moerman, "The Preference for Self-Correction in a Tai Conversational Corpus," *Language* 53, 4 (1977): 872-882.

6. Niko Besnier, "Repairs and Error in Tuvaluan Conversation" (unpublished paper, December 1982).

7. Elinor Ochs, "Talking to Children in Western Samoa," *Language in Society* 11 (1982): 77-104; and "Clarification and Culture," in Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics, Deborah Schiffrin, ed., *Meaning, Form, and Use: Linguistic Applications* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1984).

8. Alessandro Duranti, "Intentions, Self, and Local Theories of Meaning: Words and Social Action in a Samoan Context" (manuscript prepared for the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, University of California, San Diego, 1984); also Elinor Ochs and B. B. Schieffelin, "Language Acquisition and Socialization: Three Developmental Stories and Their Implications," in R. Shweder and R. LeVine, eds., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

9. This is not merely a psycholinguistic adaptation to a missing word; it is not invariably a word search. It can have strategic interactional use, as when the speaker is engaged in something interactionally "delicate," such as offering an assessment of a third party without being sure that the interlocutor shares the judgment. Then the speaker may speak until just before the point of the assessment term, hesitate, and leave it for the recipient to supply a candidate term, thereby showing that they hold the same assessment. The two can thus produce the assessment together. "Assessments" are, of course, one interactional specification of norms and values.

10. There is some indication, therefore, that some variations in repair practices may serve to implement distinctive cultural values or ethnotheories. Showing this, however, will require overcoming some difficult analytical problems.



11. What follows is based on preliminary fieldwork by Irene Daden, reported in Irene M. Daden and Marlys McClaren, "Same-Turn Repair in Quiche (Maya) Conversation: An Initial Report" (unpublished manuscript, University of California, 1978). The report should be treated with caution because subsequent extended fieldwork did not focus on these matters.

12. See Don H. Zimmerman and Candace West, "Sex Roles, Interruptions and Silences in Conversation," in B. Thorne and N. Henley, eds., *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1975); Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Women's Place in Everyday Talk: Reflections on Parent-Child Interaction," *Social Problems* 24 (1977): 521-529; and Candace West, "Against Our Will: Male Interruptions of Females in Cross-Sex Conversation," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 327 (1979): 81-97.

13. See section 4.

14. Subsequent work by West ("Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?" *Work and Occupations* 9 (1982):5-29), in which some of these overlap resolution devices are examined in terms of pejorative relations between the genders/statuses, leaves the question unresolved.

15. Furthermore, even with respect to the onset of simultaneous talk to which this tradition of work is addressed in the first instance, as early as 1973 Jefferson suggested various interactional issues that could be implicated in precisely placed onsets of talk while another was still talking. Although much of that work may not be directly in point for "interruption," it is unlikely that no such range of interactional uses is involved in interruption onsets, as alternatives to, or in combination with, the gender/status/power considerations that have hitherto been the focus of attention. See Gail Jefferson, "A Case of Precision Timing in Ordinary Conversation: Overlapped Tag-Positioned Address Terms in Closing Sequences," *Semiotica* 9 (1973): 47-96.

16. Aaron Cicourel, "Notes on the Integration of Micro- and Macro-Levels of Analysis," in K. Knorr-Cetina and A. Cicourel, eds., *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro- and Macro-Sociologies* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 51-80.

17. Harvey Sacks, "An Initial Investigation of the Usability of Conversational Data for Doing Sociology," in David N. Sudnow, ed., *Studies in Social Interaction* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 31-74.

18. Emanuel A. Schegloff, "Notes on a Conversational Practice," in *ibid.*, pp. 76-118. That paper offered as one conclusion of its analysis the following, which is directly relevant to the theme of this essay: "This is pertinent to some ways in which 'contextual variation' affects interaction. It is being proposed that the much invoked 'dependence on context' must be investigated by showing that, and how, participants analyze context and use the product of their analysis in producing their interaction. To say that interaction is context-sensitive is to say that interactants are context-sensitive, and for what and how that is so is an empirical matter that can be researched in detail. One dimension has to do with the ways in which interactants particularize their contributions so as to exhibit attention to the 'this-one-here-and-now-for-us-at-this-point-in-it' character of the interaction" (p. 115).

19. That investigators may share with the participants the common cultural knowledge that is thereby employed, and use it in conducting analysis (see Cicourel, "Notes on Integration"), is beyond question. Not every aspect of the talk, however, invokes all the same aspects of context. One may not need to know about hospitals, or that a fragment of conversation is drawn from a conversation that occurred in a hospital, to understand and appreciate a perfectly coordinated turn transfer displayed in it. For any next candidate conversational phenomenon it may not be knowable in advance what, if any, contextual sensitivities it bears. When data fragments are displayed in conversation-analytic research reports with no discursive description of "context," a claim may be read that none is specially relevant to the phenomenon being explicated.

20. For example, J. M. Atkinson, "Understanding Formality: Notes on the Categorization and Production of 'Formal' Interaction," *British Journal of Sociology* 33 (1982): 86-117; John Heritage, *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 280-290; Douglas W. Maynard, *Inside Plea Bargaining* (New York: Plenum Press,

1984), chap. 3; and, along somewhat different lines, Jurgen Streeck, "Embodied Contexts, Transcontextuals, and the Timing of Speech Acts," *Journal of Pragmatics* 8 (1984): 113-137.

21. Paula A. Treichler, Richard M. Frankel, Cheris Kramarae, Kathleen Zoppi, and Howard B. Beckman, "Problems and Problems: Power Relationships in a Medical Encounter," in Cheris Kramarae, Muriel Schulz, and William O'Barr, eds., *Language and Power* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984), 68, citing Richard M. Frankel, "Talking in Interviews: A Dispreference for Patient-Initiated Questions in Physician-Patient Encounters," in G. Psathas, ed., *Interactional Competence* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishers, in press); and Candace West, "'Ask Me No Questions . . .': An Analysis of Queries and Replies in Physician-Patient Dialogues," in S. Fisher and A. D. Todd, eds., *The Social Organization of Doctor-Patient Communication* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983), 75-106.

22. For example, see Cicourel, "Notes on Integration," and other recent papers of his.

23. E.g., John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes, *Directions in Sociolinguistics*.

24. E.g., William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).

25. E.g., Erving Goffman, "The Neglected Situation," in John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes, eds., "The Ethnography of Communication," *American Anthropologist* 66, 11 (1964): 133-137.

26. Treating conversation, speech exchange systems, and forms of interaction more generally as a bridge between macro and micro makes some sense in view of some developments in the social sciences over the last two decades or so. As many have noted, one trend has paired in dialectical development the emergence of a set of powerful themes drawing on linguistics and psychology into the so-called cognitive sciences, with a related though opposed flourishing of the thematics of human variation in anthropology. The former has focused on what goes on "in the head," has strained in the direction of universalism, has treated as the enduring reality the embodied, minded self or cognizer, and has treated action as the externalization of plans and intentions hatched by the cognizer in the mind. One anthropological stance has stressed, in contrast, cultural particularism, public culture, and the social situatedness of all conduct and practice. Interaction as an autonomous and structured field of action may be seen to mediate between them.

27. For other treatments, see H. Mehan, *Learning Lessons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); and A. McHoul, "The Organization of Turns at Formal Talk in the Classroom," *Language in Society* 7 (1978): 183-213.

28. These formulations of context are the type to which I have just objected. I use them here as vernacular terms to enlist the reader's recognition in commonsense terms (and outside the scope of a technical analysis of detailed data) of the familiar scenes to which I mean to be referring. The ensuing discussion begins to develop a technical characterization for some set of activities that goes on in the vernacularly named context. The goal is to arrive at technical characterizations of the one or more speech exchange systems organizing the several kinds of activity that occur there. For other efforts to develop descriptions of turn-taking organizations for speech exchange systems other than conversation, see J. Maxwell Atkinson and Paul Drew, *Order in Court* (London: Macmillan, 1979), chap. 2 ("Examination: A Comparison of the Turn-Taking Organizations for Conversation and Examination"); and David Greatbatch, "A Turn-Taking System for British News Interviews" (unpublished paper, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, 1984).

29. Sacks, et al., "A Simplest Systematics," 701-702.

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